HISTORY SERIES

the WATER-HORSE and OTHER YEARS

a history of 17th and 18th century Tibet

K. DHONDUP

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by

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Publisher's Note

We are happy to publish this work entitled *The Water-Horse and Other Years* by K. Dhondup.

As explained by the author himself, this work is mainly intended for the young Tibetans. Tibetan history remains scattered in various volumes and documents in different libraries and institutions. The five articles which comprise *The Water-Horse and Other Years* brings to us a glimpse of the sound and fury of the 17th and 18th century Tibet.

We shall look forward to young Tibetans who will read and write many more works on similar themes and bring to life the Tibetan past that is fast slipping from us.

Gyatso Tsering
Director
1984

Author's Introduction

There was time when the Tibetan past was dead for me. It could neither inspire nor provoke me. Then my main interest was the Tibetan future and the way it was being shaped by the material and spiritual conditions of political exile. As a young refugee, I tried to write a few lines on the future of Tibet. But I was being romantic. My approach was unrealistic. Not having understood the beauty and ugliness, the war and peace of the Tibetan past, I was unable to read the calm and confusion of the Tibetan present nor see, with any certitude, the strength and weakness of the Tibetan future. For a society uprooted: its culture and history facing the certain threat of revision and extermination at the hands of the superior occupying forces, the past with its history and heritage is of utmost importance. And it has to be preserved in all its beauty and ugliness. Lately, shadows and voices of the Tibetan past invade my mind time and again; partly because of exile and the mutilating introspection which it enforces and partly because I am in search of my roots brutally uprooted and scattered since my childhood. Now there is an urge to recreate the Tibetan past and bring to life the characters and events that shaped the Tibetan society and its political institutions so that I can hear in my mind the echoes of the war songs of the Tibetan ancestors and share their joy of triumph and sorrow of defeat.

The Water-Horse and Other Years is the result of such a personal search. It is not a book for the specialists. Thorough research and the numerous footnotes and bibliography which a specialised work entails are entirely missing. The materials brought together in this book are available in varried sources. I read the sources and brought together the five article which constitute this book. These five articles are independent of each other. But read as a whole, they pro-

vide the necessary historical sequence. I wrote the articles independent of each other as I was not sure that I will be able to complete all the five articles and bring them under one cover. So *Tsanyang Gyatso: The Unique Dalai Lama* was written first to serve as an historical introduction to my booklet *Songs of the Sixth Dalai Lama* published by the Library of Tibetan Works & Archives in 1981. The same article appears here in slightly edited form. But once I came across the fascinating and often violent characters that roamed across the pages of the 17th-18th century Tibet immersed in incessant sectarian and regional fighting, I saw in this period a sad reflection of the eternal Tibetan situation and hoped to find a clue to the historical make-up of the Tibetan political institutions and national psychology that has continued more or less unchanged. The Dzungar invasion of 1717 and their devastation of Lhasa appalled me. The emergence of Miwang Pholanay Sonam Topgyal attracted my admiration. But personally, the saddest lines were the ones that I wrote on Tsanyang Gyatso and Gyurmed Namgyal. Tsanyang Gyatso was a Dalai Lama who personally rebelled against the strict monastic training and in the process became a pawn to be tossed to and fro in the cruel sea of power politics infested by the Tibetans, Mongols and the Manchus. Gyurmed Namgyal, the son of the illustrious Miwang Pholanay, was a lonely nationalist. It was his fate to dream of a Tibet free of the Manchus at a time when every lord and lama was fawning for Manchu support. Unfortunately for Tibetan history, his inexperience and impetuosity led to his brutal death leaving his dreams shattered.

The first article *The Dawn of the Dalai Lamas* was written last. It attempts to cover briefly the central events from the First to Fifth Dalai Lamas. But the individual Dalai Lamas are not discussed at any great length since the emphasis is on the sectarian power struggle whose adroit and skilled manipulation by Desi Sonam Chophel finally brought to Tibetan history an institution which provided the political unity and the spiritual strength which it always needed in the form of *Gaden Phodrang* and the Dalai Lamas.

Sources for this book are many. But the most authoritative

and profuse have been the works of L. Petech, Shakabpa, Dungkar Losang Trinley, Desideri, Sumpa Khenpo and *History of the Dalai Lamas* etc. The director of the Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, Mr. Gyatso Tsering, deserve my heartfelt thanks for reading and commenting on the manuscript thoroughly besides persisting in his effort to enable the work to see the light of day. My friend Tashi Tsering research scholar at the Library, has helped me in locating sources and has added useful corrections besides giving numerous suggestions. The information Office and the Kashag are due my thanks for clearing the work for publication besides pointing out two factual errors. And finally I thank my friend Sonam Chophel for typing and preparing a neat copy from my messy manuscript.

The Water-Horse and Other Years is intended for the young Tibetans. It is a personal attempt to reach my generation lost in teaching, writing, knitting, studying, dancing, enjoying tv, video, football, cricket or basketball that when it comes to the question of Tibetan survival as a cultural and political community, it is our past—its history and culture based on Buddhism and Bon that will see us through another catastrophe, all in one piece.

—K. Dhondup

1984

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1

The Dawn of the Dalai Lamas

The emergence of the Dalai Lamas as a concrete spiritual and temporal institution shaping both the secular and religious structure of Tibet is intimately entertwined with the whole growth and history of the sectarian and political struggles that devastated the Tibetan nation for more than a century. If the early sectarian struggle during the imperial Tibet was between Bon and Buddhism, the later struggle was among the major Tibetan Buddhist sects. In their bid to outdo each other, the sectarian struggle largely between the newly instituted Gelugpa and the older Nyingmapa and Kargyud sects acquired political dimensions that involved not only the whole of Tibet but the imperial Manchus of China and the diverse tribes of Mongolia. And the one sect to come out victorious had at its mercy the complete political domination of Tibet. Out of the chaos and confusion of such bitter sectarian struggle rose the solid institution of *Gaden Phodrang* whose supporters, with the military backing of the fierce Mongols carved out one of the most unique systems of spiritual and secular blend the world history has seldom seen personified by the Dalai Lamas of Tibet.

Shigates, in 1642—the Water-Horse Year, witnessed one of the most significant sectarian power struggles in Tibetan history which decisively ended one era and heralded another. Karma Tenkyong Wangpo, the last Tsangpa ruler was captured alongwith his ministers Dronyer Bongong and Gangshungpa. The famed Karmapa monastery Tashi Zilnon meaning "The Suppressor of the Significance of Tashi Lhunpo" founded by Karma Phuntsok Namgyal in 1618 to avenge the insults inflicted on him by the Lhasa Gelugpa monks and officials, was also overtaken by the combined forces of Gushri

Khan, the Qosot Mongol chief and Desi Sonam Chophel — the cunning and politically ambitious regent of the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Losang Gyatso. So intense was sectarianism then that the downfall of the Tsangpa ruler and the capture and dismantling of Tashi Zilnon was unhesitatingly welcomed and openly celebrated in Lhasa by the monks of Sera, Drepung and Ganden by burning incense and hoisting prayer flags everywhere in the city.

Ever since 1435 when Dhondup Dorjee of Rinpung clan captured Shigatse, this central Tibetan city had become the bastion of Tsangpa hegemony. They adhered to the Karma Kagyud sect and observed with extreme suspicion and unease the growing religious and political influence of the Gelugpas based mainly in Lhasa. The Gelugpas came forth as a new sectarian and political force on the Tibetan horizon in 1372 when Tsongkhapa first came from Amdo to U'sTsang, then ruled by Phamodrupas. History is witness to the fact that Tsongkhapa was lucky to have ventured to U's Tsang at the time of Phagdru Drakpa Gyaltsen, perhaps the only ruler of his time who did not bloody his hands in sectarian feuds and killings. Remembered for giving Tibet a peaceful and prosperous rule and referred to as Gongma Chogyal Chenpo, Drakpa Gyaltsen who was truly non-sectarian, had vowed at the feet of Yogi Thangthong Gyalpo (1385-1464) to rule Tibet honestly and had received with equal devotion Bodong Chogles Namgyal (1376-1451) at his Nedong palace. He and his ministers not only followed an enlightened and open religious policy but materially assisted many Lamas including Tsongkhapa and his disciples in their spiritual and sectarian endeavours. Soon the new Gelug school steadily won followers and in time began to overshadow the existing Sakya, Kagyud, Nyingma, Jonang and Bonpo strongholds. Once Tsogkhapa had stepped in Lhasa, his serene personality and deep spiritual learning succeeded in structuring a firm foundation for the new Gelug school. In 1409, both Drakpa Gyaltsen and his minister Neu Namkha Zangpo agreed to lend royal patronage to the institution and introduction of the *Monlam Chenmo* (Great Prayer Festival) in Lhasa. Held annually thereafter, the *Monlam Chenmo,*

whether by design or accident, acquired a strong political significance as thousands of Tibetans came to attend it every year from every corner of Tibet. In this same year, Tsongkhapa founded the first important Gelugpa monastery called Ganden which in time became the third largest monastery administering 3,300 monks. Six years after the introduction of Monlam festival and founding of Ganden monastery, Tsongkhapa met in 1415 Gedun Drupa, a learned monk born in 1391 at Shabtod in Tsang whom history proved to be his most important and politically significant student.

This meeting and their devotion to each other and the Gelug heritage was of decisive historical significance as Gedun Drupa was later referred to as the First Dalai Lama. Gedun Drupa founded the Tashi Lhunpo monastery in 1447 with financial help from the governer of Shigatse Chongyaspa Hor Paljor Zangpo and became its abbot Panchen Gedun Drupa. Before that, in 1416, Jamyang Choije (1379-1449), one of the foremost disciples of Tsongkhapa founded the Drepung monastery with the royal patronage of Neuzong minister Namkha Zangpo which in time became the largest monastery with 7,700 monks. Three years later, in 1419, Jemchen Chosje Shakya Yeshi (1354-1438), another disciple of Tsongkhapa who went to represent Tsongkhapa at the Ming court returned from China to found Sera monastery with help from Neu Namkha Zangpo and his son Namkha Paljor, which in time became the second largest monastery with 5,500 monks. These major monasteries, strategically situated to safeguard and cope not only with the monastic affairs but gain easy access to political, if not military roles in Tibetan history, was a triumphant contribution of Tsongkhapa to the growth of the firm foundation of his sect. When Tsongkhapa passed away that same year, U's with Lhasa as its capital had become undoubtedly a Gelugpa stronghold and Shigatse was the centre of Karma Kagyud, both sides backed by political clans and factions. And the implication of the emerging Gelugpa force, though nowhere near a major power to rule the whole of Tibet, was not lost on the Ringpung rulers of Tsang and their Karma Kagyud Lamas.

After the demise of Gongma Drakpa Gyaltsen in 1432,

the declining reign of Phamodrupa and the host of inept rulers which it brought forth on the throne of Nedong plunged the whole country into a political power struggle intricately expressed in sectarian terms. Because of intense internal disputes among the nephews of Gongma Drakpa Gyaltsen, all of whom claimed the Nedong throne without producing a single capable leader, the Phamodrupa hegemony founded by the courageous and skilled Situ Changchub Gyaltsen in 1358 by doing away with what was left of the mighty Sakya dynasty, in turn became merely a name. By 1434, the collapse of the house of Phamodrupa was confirmed. The very next year, Dhondup Dorjee of Ringpung captured Shigatse by force of arm and defiantly shifted his capital from Ringpung to Shigatse. Seeing Dhondup Dorjee's open opposition to Nedong throne, numerous smaller Tsang leaders allied themselves with him. For the next few decades, U's and Tsang were continuously involved in a fierce power struggle whose leaders supported either the Gelug or the Karma Kagyud sects. Donyod Dorjee, the ambitious younger son of Ringpung Norzang was a staunch Karmapa supporter. He was refused permission to build a Karmapa monastery in Lhasa by the Gelug administrator and the one he built outside Lhasa city in 1479 was destroyed during the night and razed to the ground by the Gelugpa monks. In retaliation, he attacked U's in 1480 and captured a few areas. After another unsuccessful raid on Lhasa itself in 1481, an impatient Donyod Dorjee, incited by Fourth Shamarpa Chosdak Yeshi Neu Zongpon (1453-1524) of Karma Kagyud, marched on Nedong and forced into exile the Gelug patrons Ngawang Sonam Lhunpo and his son Ngawang Sonam Namgyal and changed the very shape of the whole administration thereafter. Being the most powerful leader of the Ringpung faction, he and his relatives appointed all the influential ministers at Nedong from the Ringpung clan, reducing the Nedong Gongma to a mere figurehead. Having failed to capture Gyantse in 1485 when Lhasa came to the latter's rescue, Donyod Dorjee awaited his chance. In 1488 when Gyantse was rife with internal disputes, Ringpung forces attacked and captured Gyantse

town. After that, in 1492, he attacked U's and again in 1498, he captured Lhasa. At the instigation of Seventh Karmapa Chodak Gyatso (1454-1506), he refused the Gelugpa monks of the three monasteries permission to observe and celebrate the politically and religiously significant *Monlam* festival and instead decreed that for the next 20 years the nearby Kargyud and Sakya monks shall convene the *Monlam* festival. This was a most severe blow.

Though the Nedong throne was occupied by a king of Phamodrupa clan, effective control of the administration of the country was in the hands of the Ringpung clan whose restless leader Donyod Dorjee had conquered most of U's and Tsang provinces. But by 1505, Ringpung clan itself was in danger of being overthrown. Tseten Dorjee, a servant of the Ringpung clan who had served in their stables at Shigatse was a man of ambition and ideas. Deep inside, he nurtured the hope of ruling Shigatse. With this hidden ambition, he played a cruel joke on the Ringpung family by seeking permission to order 300 *khabs* (sewing needles) which they readily gave. By altering *khab* to *khrab* (armours), Tseten Dorjee collected 300 suits of armour and other weapons to equip his supporters who included monks of Karmapa monasteries. Soon after, he took over Shigatse from the Ringpung clan and obtained the appointment of a minister by making friendly overtures to the Nedong Gongma. Tseten Dorjee was now referred to as Depa Tsangpa and he began contacting the Chogthu Mongol tribes at Kokonor for further support in his bid to rule U's and Tsang.

Apalled by the deteriorating situation of the country the ex-Gongma Ngawang Tashi Drakpa of Phamodrupa convened at Nedong an assembly of all the ministers and chiefs to discuss and debate constructively the restoration and maintenance of law and order situation. But as foreseen by the common people who entertained themselves by comparing the gorgeous dress and trappings of the retinue of the ministers who represented various vested interests and factions, the conference soon degenerated into an endless and noisy squabble. Though Donyod Dorjee of Ringpung clan

still controlled Lhasa where he had effectively suppressed the Gelugpa monasteries from celebrating *Monlam* festival, by 1516 his rule was strongly challenged by Konchok Rinchen, the man whom Ringpung family deposed from the council of Nedong ministers in 1480. A year later, Ringpung forces had to withdraw from Lhasa to the joy of the people and the Gelug monks who were now free to celebrate *Monlam Chenmo* under the spiritual guidance of Gedun Gyatso, born in Tsang Tanag Segme in 1475 and recognised as the reincarnation of Panchen Gedun Drupa. But the sectarian struggle did not abate.

In 1526, a Drigung monk chieftain named Gompa Kunga Rinchen lead the armed forces of Kongpo and Sokha and forcibly took over the Gelug monasteries in Drigung giving rise to a fight between Drigung and the Neuzong chief Depa Kyidshodpa, a Gelug patron. And again in 1537 when Gedun Gyatso was residing in his Chokhorgyal monastery, a sudden Drigung attack lost 18 Gelug monasteries. In the ensuing years, it became necessary for the Gelug monks to carry a hat with two cover colours—red signifying Nyingma and yellow signifying Gelug — to disguise their sects while travelling around in small numbers.

Gedun Gyatso, the abbot of Drepung passed away in 1542, at his residence called *Gaden Phodrang*. A year later, his reincarnation was discovered at Tohlung valley. Named Sonam Gyatso after his arrival at Drepung, this reincarnation proved to be an extremely brilliant scholar with the spiritual maturity required to become the undisputed abbot of Drepung. In 1559, Gongma Drakpa Jungne invited Sonam Gyatso to Nedong in recognition of his scholarship and growing popularity. Known far and wide for his learning, Sonam Gyatso at the same time displayed popular leadership quality by averting numerous violent factional and sectarian disputes with his personal charm and mediation. A year after his return from the visit to Gongma Drakpa Jugne in Nedong, fresh sectarian fighting broke out in Lhasa between the Gelug and Kargyud monks and their lay supporters. None of the local Lamas succeeded in restoring peace between the fighting sects and Sonam Gyatso was called on

to remedy the situation. With his charisma and spiritual grace, Sonam Gyatso successfully put an end to the fighting. Gradually, Sonam Gyatso was shaping himself into a national leader. When the Kyichu river flooded Lhasa by overunning its stone dikes in the summer of 1562, Sonam Gyatso with his followers was seen actively releiving the flood victims and repairing the dikes. Two years later, the Nedong Gongma Drakpa Jugne passed away and Sonam Gyatso was requested to perform the traditional funeral rites. Though Drakpa Jugne's son was followed by two others from the Phamodrupa clan on the Nedong throne, the Phamodrupas who had been nothing more than mere figureheads since 1434, completely ceased to exist. But Sonam Gyatso had now gained spiritual fame far and wide. Altan khan, the Tumat Mongol chief, invited him to visit Mongolia which he declined. Instead Sonam Gyatso visited Tashi Lhunpo monastery in 1569 to study the monastic administrative structure and layout of his predecessor Gedun Drupa. After his close study of Tashi Lhunpo monastic establishment, Sonam Gyatso appointed a representative of his at the monastery and returned to Lhasa.

Once again in 1577, Altan Khan invited Sonam Gyatso to visit Mongolia. The invitation was brought by a large delegation who travelled on camels and horses to Tibet with month long provisions. At a time when every Tibetan chief and lama was trying to gain the goodwill and support of the Mongol tribes around Kokonor, it was an extraordinary sign of Sonam Gyatso's fame to have him repeatedly invited to Mongolia itself. Accepting the invitation the second time, Sonam Gyatso was grandly escorted to the Dam region by the monks of Sera, Drepung and Gaden, representatives of Nedong Gongma and various Tibetan nobles who offered him a magnificient farewell. Exactly after a year of extremely difficult journey on arid landscape in blinding snowstorms and frequent mirages, Sonam Gyatso and his party reached Mongolian outpost of Chahar in the summer of 1578, where they were received by the tent dwelling Mongol nomads and the reception party of Altan Khan. After a few more days journey, Altan Khan himself received Sonam

Gyatso with a thousand cavalrymen and together proceeded to the capital where Altan Khan lived in a very sumptous tent. Soon after, Sonam Gyatso embarked on a spree of Buddhist instructions and spiritual ceremonies. Impressed by his deep learning and moved by the spiritual teachings, Altan Khan embraced Buddhism and issued decrees that established the Buddhist law in Mongolia and revived the teachings of Lord Buddha introduced by Sakya Pandita (1182-1251) long ago. Animal and human sacrifices to the deceased as a part of ancestor worship was decreed completely forbidden.

Altan Khan made Sonam Gyatso a number of offerings and conferred the Mongolian title "Dalai Lama", meaning "Superior Teacher vast and deep like an Ocean" and a seal inscribed with the title "Dorje Chang" meaning "The Holder of Vajra". In turn, Sonam Gyatso, now the Third Dalai Lama conferred the title of "Religious king, Brahma of the Gods" on Altan Khan and foretold that within eighty years, the descendents of Altan Khan would rule Mongolia and China.

Altan Khan further agreed to finance the construction of a monastery on the site where the Third Dalai Lama Sonam Gyatso gave teachings which now acquired special sanctity. Thegchen Chokhorling monastery was then founded on the site. Hearing of the Third Dalai Lama's spiritual fame, other Mongol tribes and Chinese notables invited him to visit their regions. On his way back, the Dalai Lama visited many of these regions. Recognising his influence over Altan Khan, the Chinese requested the Dalai Lama to ask the Khan to stop the Chahar Mongols from invading Chinese territory. Altan Khan, at the Dalai Lama's intercession lessend the raids against Chinese territory and also opened a diplomatic office at Tongkhar, halfway between Lhasa and Chahar to maintain the close relationship with the Dalai Lama intact.

At the Chinese province of Ning-hsia, the third Dalai Lama gave teachings to a huge gathering of people from Turkestan, Mongolia and China with the help of translators provided by the Chinese governer. At this time, a delegation from the Ming court of China who were frequently raided by the Mongol tribes from eastern Turkestan, Kokonor

regions and even southern Russia invited the Dalai Lama to visit China. But the Dalai Lama declined as he had already agreed to visit Kham region of Tibet.

Arriving in Lithang, Kham, in 1580, the Third Dalai Lama founded the Lithang monastery called Jamchen Choekhor Ling and then moved to Chamdo where he heard the news of the demise of Altan Khan whose son and successor Dhuring Khan also known as Sengye Dugureng Timur, requested the Dalai Lama to return to Mongolia. Leaving Chamdo in 1582 to return to Mongolia, the Dalai Lama passed through the Kokonor regions where in 1583 he founded the famous Kubum Jampa Ling monastery on the exact site of Tsongkhapa's birth and became the honoured guest of two Mongol chiefs Dayan Noyon and Junang Khan. Reaching Mongolia in 1585, the Dalai Lama stayed for two years with Dhuring Khan. Journeying homeward to Tibet in 1588, the Third Dalai Lama Sonam Gyatso became ill and passed away on the way. His ashes were taken to Drepung in Lhasa for preservation.

Sonam Gyatso, the Third Dalai Lama, fulfilled his mission in life by his spiritual learning and personal popularity. Above all, his contribution lay in cementing a solid faith among the Mongols and Khan for the person and institution of the Dalai Lama which stood the test of time and history again and again in the next one century or so. Though not a sectarian bigot himself, Sonam Gyatso's performance in both the spiritual and political field as a follower of Tsongkhapa and reincarnation of Gedun Gyatso did the Gelugpa sect much needed service at a time when every sect needed strong military alliances to survive. And in the military might of the Mongols and their devotion to the Dalai Lamas, the Gelugpa sect found an anchorage which held even against the strongest sectarian onslaught and in time enabled it to suppress others at its mercy. As if fate favoured the alliance of the Mongols with the Dalai Lama, the fourth reincarnation, Yonten Gyatso, born in 1589 in Mongolia to a Chokhur tribal chief, a descendant of Altan Khan was favoured against another popular candidate born in Tibet itself. A large delegation of Nedong ministers, representa-

tives of the three monasteries and the personal treasurer of the Third Dalai Lama went to Mongolia to confirm the discovery and welcome the child to Lhasa. But the Mongolian parents refused to part with Yonten Gyatso who had to be educated and given spiritual training in Mongolia itself by learned teachers sent from Lhasa.

At this time, the Kargyud sect was reviving its strength in Tsang under the patronage of Karma Tensung Wangpo, who had become the Depa Tsangpa at Shigatse after the death of his father Tseten Dorjee. The Gelug official and monks in Lhasa felt the extreme necessity of the presence of the Fourth Dalai Lama Yonten Gyatso in Lhasa as a rallying point. Karma Tensung Wangpo, the man who championed the Karmapa cause was a courageous leader and learned member of the Karmapa sect. Trained in common labour as well as reading, writing and religious education by his father Tseten Dorjee, he had conquered, already in 1576, four large territories in southern Tibet together with numerous areas in western and northern Tibet when the Third Dalai Lama Sonam Gyatso was in Mongolia with Altan Khan. Compelled by such critical situation in central Tibet itself for the Gelugpa sect, the Fourth Dalai Lama Yonten Gyatso was brought to Lhasa despite his parents refusal, in 1601. On the way to Lhasa, Yonten Gyatso spent some time in Tongkhor and improved the Tibetan—Mongolian diplomatic outpost established by the previous Dalai Lama Sonam Gyatso and Altan Khan. Reaching Lhasa, he was officially received and accorded recognition, enthroned as the Fourth Dalai Lama and initiated into monkhood by an ex-Gadan Tripa Sangye Rinchen. When he was studying in Drepung, Lozang Chosgyan (1570-1662), the humble and learned scholar of Tashi Lhunpo visited him. Acclaimed as an accomplished teacher of the Fourth Dalai Lama, Lozang Chosgyan received the title of "Panchen" (Great Scholar) and his reincarnations henceforth were referred to as Panchen Rinpoche of Tashi Lhunpo.

Sometime after the Dalai Lama's arrival in Lhasa, a Shamar Karmapa monk composed an intricate poem which he offered to Yonten Gyatso. As the Dalai Lama's attendants failed

to interpret the obscure poem, they sent a very strong reply to the poem condemning it. This minor incident caused a lot of ill feelings and the Shamar Karmapa monks went around spreading an insulting rumour that the Dalai Lama's attendants were ignorant of poetry. Related to this was another minor incident of 1605 when Sixth Shamar Garwang Choskyi Wangchuk, on his visit to the Jokhang in Lhasa, offered a scarf to the Buddha's image on which he had written his prayers in verse. The sectarian Lhasa attendants of the Dalai Lama misinterpreted the prayer as an insult to Gyalwa Yonten Gyatso, and the Mongolian cavalrymen who had escorted the Dalai Lama to Lhasa in 1601 at once rode out and raided the stables and horses of Shamar Rinpoche. An enraged Karma Tensung Wangpo retaliated by raiding Lhasa and expelling the Mongols. In the ensuing conflict, Karma Tensung Wangpo retained the stronger hand and as a show of his strength and dislike for Gelugpa, he refused in 1606 to receive the Dalai Lama as a welcome gesture or make him any formal offer of assistance on the latter's visit to Chokhorgyal monastery founded by the Second Dalai Lama Gedun Gyatso. But the Nedong Gongma and Panchen Lozang Chosgyal gave a fine reception and the monks of Tashi Lhunpo lined the streets of Shigatse to honour the Fourth Dalai Lama. At Gonkar in the province of U's, the Dalai Lama received letters from the head of Sixth Shamar Rinpoche. True hopes of a meeting that can possibly reconcile the warring sects ran high on both sides but a few unscrupulous attendants of both the Lamas did not favour a meeting and Gyalwa Yonten Gyatso was quickly rushed to Lhasa. In this selfish and narrow minded manner, a rare chance of possible reconciliation was lost due to the bigotry of the attendants whose dangerous control over their respective lamas seemed total. Yet another chance at reconciliation was to offer itself years later.

Karma Phuntsok Namgyal, whose father Karma Tensung Wangpo died in 1611, became the new Depa Tsangpa. As a part of his fathers' legacy he controlled the whole of Tsang, Tod (western Tibet) and large parts of U's (central Tibet). Karma Phuntsok Namgyal, unlike his father was willing to

respect the Dalai Lama in recognition of his spiritual status and learning. After his second attack on the Bhutanese which compelled the Bhutan kings to invite the Panchen Lama's intervention, Karma Phuntsok Namgyal visited Lhasa and sent word through his private secretary to arrange an audience with the Dalai Lama. This was a major opportunity for the Fourth Dalai Lama to reconcile with the Tsangpa hegemony and Karmapas. But once again, Sonam Drakpa, the chief attendant of Dalai Lama not only rejected the overture but declared the Depa Tsangpa of Shigatse an enemy of the Gelugpa. Deeply offended by this affront, a dissappointed Karma Phuntsok Namgyal returned to Shigatse. And once insulted, he seldom forgave.

The Fourth Dalai Lama, more or less a puppet in the hands of his attenddants, was invited by the Shen tsung emperor to the court of Ming in 1615 for the express purpose of blessing the Buddhist temple at Nanking, and also as a possible influence to pacify the fierce Mongol tribes that continuously raided China. This was in fact an excellent opportunity to impress the volatile and sectarian political scene of Tibet with his authority and influence recognised even by the Chinese emperor. But for one reason or the other, the Dalai Lama refused the invitation and instead offered prayers facing towards China.

Gyalwa Yonten Gyatso died young in 1617 when he was only 28 years old, after a short but sudden rheumatic attack at Drepung. His cremated ashes were shared between Drepung monastery, his Mongolian parents and a Tumat Mongol patron. Though a very realised scholar of wide spiritual learning whose position implied tremendous power of faith and worship not only among the Tibetans but the various Mongol tribes, Yonten Gyatso failed to impress the turbulent scene of his time. Partly because he was young but mostly because he was kept closely guarded by his influential chief attendant Sonam Drakpa, he passed away leaving the troubles of the time for his next reincarnation to clear away.

But in Shigatse, Karma Phuntsok Namgyal, burning with the desire to avenge the insult inflicted on him in Lhasa, was busy preparing a serious onslaught against the three

Gelugpa monasteries of Lhasa. Sometime earlier, the Gelug supporter Kyishod Depa Sonam Namgyal, angered by Karma Phuntsok Namgyal's declared intention of decreeing the recognition of the reincarnation of Fourth Dalai Lama unlawful, had sent the Avalokiteshvara statue in the Potala as a gift to the Khalka Mongol brothers asking them to wage war against the Depa Tsangpa. Accordingly, the Khalkas started challenging the Depa Tsangpa. Partly incited by the show of combined Mongolian and U's soldiers and mainly to wash away with blood the ignominy which he suffered earlier at the hands of the Dalai Lama's attendants, Karma Phuntsok Namgyal started his onslaught against Lhasa and its three monasteries in 1618. So thorough and organised was his attack that the resistance which the monks of the three monasteries put up was of no use at all. Killing was indiscriminate in Lhasa itself. Both Sera and Drepung were severely damaged. The Fourth Panchen Rinpoche Losang Choskyi Gyaltsen sought asylum in Ngari on the excuse of pilgrimage to Mt. Kailash. The whole Drepung hill was literally littered with the dead bodies of the massacred monks. The surviving Mongolian soldiers returned to their country. Monks from Sera and Drepung sought refuge in Taklung Kargyud monasteries on their way to the Kokonor regions. Taklung Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (1571-1626) fed the escaping monks for four months and obtained permission from the Depa Tsangpa to return the Gelug monks to their monasteries. In return, grateful Sera and Drepung agreed to donate all the used tea leaves of *Monlam* festival to Taklung monastery besides giving every monk affiliated with Taklung the exact share of gifts which a monk attending the *Monlam* festival received. Apart from such interlude of sectarian harmony, the wrath of Karma Phuntsok Namgyal's onslaught saw many Gelugpa monasteries forcibly turned to Kargyud and once again, as in 1512 under Ringpung Donyod Dorjee, Gelugpa monks were restricted in their movements. And this time, Karma Phuntsok Namgyal set up two Tsangpa military camps outside Lhasa which effectively cut off Drepung and Sera monasteries from the city and blocked the main route. But the most cruel blow for the Gelugpa came, however,

when Karma Phuntsok Namgyal sternly decreed it unlawful to search for the reincarnation of the Fourth Dalai Lama thus paving to block effectively the foundation of the emerging political and spiritual spirit and stamina of *Gaden Phodrang* and Gelug supremacy.

After such injuries to the Gelugpa sect, Karma Phuntsok Namgyal started the construction of his own version of Karmapa monastery at a strategic site at Shigatse overlooking the Tashi Lhunpo monastery founded by the First Dalai Lama. To add insult to injury, he named his monastery "Tashi Zilnon" meaning "The Suppressor of the Significance of Tashi Lhunpo." The stones for the building of Tashi Zilnon were taken from a hill just above Tashi Lhunpo monastery. It is said that the workers deliberately rolled boulders on the quarters of Tashi Lhunpo monks killing and injuring many Gelugpa monks, besides jeering and insulting them whenever they passed by Tashi Zilnon.

It was in this atmosphere of extreme sectarian rivalry, intensified by territorial and political power struggles which engulfed central Tibet, that Ngawang Losang Gyatso, later revered as the Great Fifth Dalai Lama was born in 1617 at Chongyas. But the credit of discovering and confirming the reincarnation of the Fifth Dalai Lama under very suspicious and threatening eyes of Karma Phuntsok Namgyal and the ultimate political success of unifying the whole of Tibet under *Gaden Phodrang* — the name given by the Second Dalai Lama to the private residence built by the First Dalai Lama at Drepung — goes to Sonam Rabten *alias* Sonam Chophel, the chief attendent of the late Dalai Lama, whose zeal to preserve and promote the Gelugpa sect on the solid foundation of the mystic lure and spiritual sway of both the person and institution of the Dalai Lama was sometimes carried to grotesque extremes. Courageous and cunning, Sonam Chophel had sent groups of people to different parts of Tibet in search of the reincarnation of Gyalwa Yonten Gyatso. In 1619, when Lhasa was sandwiched with tension between the Tsangpa soldiers on the one hand and the Mongols on the other, Sonam Chophel received secret information on the remarkable boy born in Chingwa Taktse of Chongyas. When

further information confirmed that the child was indeed exceptional, the shrewed Sonam Chophel at once visited Chongyas under great secrecy with a number of personal belongings of the late Dalai Lama which the child recognised without any difficulty. Returning to Lhasa, Sonam Chophel secretly requested the Panchen Rinpoche and another high Lama to see the child. Both of them fully confirmed the child as the reincarnation of the Fourth Dalai Lama. Due to the murky political climate of the country and Karma Phuntsok Namgyal's stern decree of discovering the Dalai Lama's reincarnation unlawful, everything concerning the discovery and whereabouts of the Fifth Dalai Lama was kept a strict secret.

At this time when the overall situation in U's Tsang was gloomy and frustrating for the Gelugpas, fresh hope came in the form of a small Mongolian force who returned to Lhasa in 1619, most probably with the secret desire to avenge their expulsion from Lhasa in 1605 by the forces of Karma Tenzung Wangpo. Moreover Sonam Chophel had also contacted the Mongolians for a possible showdown with Depa Tsangpa. But the Mongols, contrary to the expectations of the Sera and Drepung monks, played it safe by camping at some distance of the Lhasa town itself and did not give any immediate indication of preparing a major assault against the occupying forces of Karma Phuntsok Namgyal. This led the impatient Lhasa populace to refer jokingly of the Mongol camp as "too large for a bandit gang and too few for an army". This joke and apparent indifference of the Mongols to the predicament of the Gelug monks in Lhasa gradually relaxed the vigilance of the Depa Tsangpa forces who slowly lost their original suspicions of the Mongol march back to Lhasa. But the Mongol commander was in clandestine touch with Sonam Chophel and forces of Depa Kyidshodpa and had established solid connections with Mongol monks of Drepung who supplied them up-to-date information on the happenings in Lhasa and the movement of the Depa Tsangpa forces. One day in 1621, the Mongols suddenly attacked. The unprepared Tsangpa forces scattered. Those that ran away and sought shelter in Chagpori were stopped supply of drinking water.

The rest of the Tsang soldiers left on the battle field were injured and killed by the dreaded mass stampde of Mongolian cavalry. When a second stampede was in preparation and Karma Phuntsok Namgyal, learning of the abrupt defeat of his soldiers in Lhasa was preparing a major assult, the Second Panchen Lama Losang Choskyi Gyaltsen, Gaden Tripa Konchok Chosphel and Taklung Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, fearing that a major fighting will ensue causing needless bloodshed and destruction of life and property, mediated between the Depa Tsangpa and the Mongols. After prolonged negotiations, the victorious Mongolian and U's forces demanded that the Gaden Phodrang must be restored its estates from Lhasa upto Ragmen, Chazod Sonam Chophel should be allowed to stay in Drepung Phodrang. The estates of Sera, Gaden and Drepung confiscated by the Depa Tsangpa must be returned, all the Gelug monasteries in U's and Tsang including Dechen Sang Ngag Khar converted to Kagyud and Nyingma sects must be restored, Depa Kyidshod must be given Phenpo Khartse Zong and the discovery of the reincarnation of the Fourth Dalai Lama must be allowed. The Depa Tsangpa agreed to all the conditions except the discovery of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation. Unknown to him though, the Fifth Dalai Lama was then five years old. After these negotiations, the Mongolians returned to their country.

The political tension eased a little in 1622 when Karma Tenkyong Wangpo, a 12 years old boy succeeded the Depa Tsangpa seat left vacant by the demise of his father Karma Phuntsok Namgyal due to a sudden rheumatic attack. In the death of Karma Phuntsok Namgyal, the man who sternly decreed it unlawful to discover the Fifth Dalai Lama, Chazod Sonam Chophel saw his desired chance of revealing the long kept secret of the discovery of the Dalai Lama who was now brought to Drepung by the representatives of the three Gelugpa monasteries. But no sooner was his discovery revealed, his supporters panicked for his safety. While many desired to take him to Mongolia, Sonam Chopel and his assistants hid the Dalai Lama in E in southern Tibet for quite a stretch of time. Only in 1625 he was initiated into monkhood by the Panchen Lama when he was once again brought

to Drepung under great fear and strain. On the whole, life for the Gelugpa monks was still fraught with hazards in Central Tibet and their very survival was in doubt under the stronger force of Karma Tenkyong Wangpo, now referred to as Desi Tsangpa (Regent of Tsang).

Karma Tenkyong Wangpo, following in the footsteps of his late father, betrayed no love towards the Gelugpas. As a first step towards strengthening his administration, he retained only 13 strong estates including Zhiskha Samdruptse and disbanded all the rest suspecting them as potential source of future rebellion against his rule. His next move was to establish contact with the Chogthu, the chief of Halha Mongols around Kokonor with whom the Tsang ruling family had acquired close friendship since 1565. But at this juncture, in 1632, the whole Kokonor region came under the pro-Bonpo Chahar chief Legden. And in Beri in Kham reigned the Bonpo king Donyod Dorjee, who conquered Derge, Denkhok, Nagshod Tsodruk, Chamdo, Riwoche etc. Both these pro-Bonpo kings were extremely anti-Gelugpa. Karma Tenkyong Wangpo established contact with these two kings immediately and vowed to destroy the three Gelugpa monasteries of Lhasa and eradicate the very name of Gelugpa from the Tibetan landscape. Accordingly in 1634, Chahar chief Lenten marched with his soldiers to help Desi Tsangpa Karma Tenkyong Wangpo in his avowed task of eradicating Gelugpa. But Lenten suddenly fell ill and died at Sharatha. In this same year, Chogthu, the Halha Mongolian chief caused civil war amongst the seven tribes of Halha Mongols. As a result, Chogthu and his tribe was exiled. They came to Kokonor regions and settled there. Being a patron of Bonpos, he destroyed, killed and imprisoned monasteries and monks. Meanwhile in Kham, Beri king Donyod Dorjee destroyed the monasteries of Sakya, Gelug and Nyingma, killing many of their monks. Moreover, a rumour that the Halha chief Chogthu was preparing to advance on U's reached Lhasa like wildfire. Convinced that their very survival was threatened, the abbots of the three monasteries, Chazod Sonam Chophel and other Gelugpa officials and patrons secretly met to find a way out of the increasing persecution. The meeting decided to ap-

proach the Mongol converts of Gelugpa for military support and selected Chazod Sonam Chophel to lead a secret delegation to Mongolia.

Reaching Mongolia, Chazod Sonam Chophel approached the Qirat, Dsungar and Urluk Mongol tribes and gave a detailed report of the precarious existence of the Gelugpas and the Dalai Lama under the animosity and suppression of the Desi Tsangpa and his allies. The enraged Mongols, newly converted to Gelugpas and deeply devoted to the Dalai Lama, at once decided to wage a religious war. But Gushri Khan, 28 years old bearded Qosot chief, was chosen to lead the Mongols, expressed his desire to secretly visit Lhasa in disguise to gain a first hand knowledge and assessment of the situation before waging the actual attack. Assured of such strong military help, Chazod Sonam Chophel and the other messengers returned to Lhasa and dispersed in various parts of the country to convey the news of their journey to Mongolia. It was agreed that they will all gather in Mongolia after a year to report the situation in the various parts of the country.

But Karma Tenkyong Wangpo was a step ahead and had already approached the Chogthu Mongols for help and in 1635, Arsalang, the son of the Chogthu chief marched on Tibet with 10,000 soldiers to wipe out the Gelugpa sect.

Gushri Khan, realising that if he delayed any longer the Gelugpas will be eradicated from Tibet, intercepted Arsalang's marching army and arranged at once for a secret conference with the latter. At Gushri Khan's insistence Arsalang changed his plans. Though his army had already covered a distance of some seven hundred miles from Kokonor to Tengri Nor he now entered U's with only a small force of bodyguards, leaving the bulk of his soldiers near Tengri Nor lake. Not knowing the exact intention and purpose of Arsalang's march on Lhasa, the Karmapa Lama and his disciples fled from Lhasa. Arsalang entered without any opposition.

At Lhasa, Arsalang's arrival created thick tension and when he sent a message to the Dalai Lama in Drepung to come to see him, everyone assumed that he did not intend to show any respect to the Dalai Lama. On the New Year

Day of 1635, the Dalai Lama met Arsalang at Ramoche temple. To the surprise and releive of everyone, Arsalang prostrated to the Dalai Lama and then proceeded to Drepung to receive his religious instructions, and vowed, that he will never harm the cause of the Gelugpa. Gushri Khan's secret meeting with Arsalang did not go in vain. But more ominous things were in store. Making use of black-magic, the Tsang faction sent Arsalang insane who ran amok among his troops. Karma Tenkyong Wangpo was enraged when Arsalang turned a traitor to his cause and betrayed his trust. He sent a message to Arsalang's father reporting Arsaang's irresponsibility and at the same time sent his men to attack and expel the Chogthu Mongol from Lhasa. Meanwhile, the Chogthu chief had secretly sent his men to Lhasa who assassinated Arsalang for disobeying his father. The leaderless Chogthu Mongols in Lhasa, if incited, were in danger of attacking and wiping out the Gelugpa and Gushri Khan needed to act fast.

Sensing the situation, Gushri Khan planned a strategic campaign and in the spring of 1637, attacked the main Chogthu tribal camps in Kokonor. With reinforcement from Boatin Kungteji, Gushri Khan took the Chogthu tribes by surprise and the latter lost the war at the last battle of the bloody hill (Olago) fought between two hills. The Chogthu leader was killed by Gushri Khan's brother and the surviving soldiers surrendered. When the Chogthu Mongols left at Nam Tso lake by Arsalang heard what tragedy had befallen their tribe in Kokonor, they decided to settle down at Nam Tso itself realising the futility of joining forces with Karma Tenkyong Wangpo or returning to Kokonor to fight the Qosot Gushri Khan. With the defeat, surrender and settlement of the Chogthu Mongols due to the manipulation and strategy of Gushri Khan, Karma Tenkyong Wangpo was no longer the major threat that he was to the very survival of Gelugpas. In this relaxed atmosphere of possible Gelugpa survival, Gushri Khan visited Lhasa in 1638 with a host of other Mongolian pilgrims. At a grand religious ceremony in Jokhang supervised by the Dalai Lama, Gushri Khan was placed on a throne and given the title of Tenzing Choskyi

Gyalpo (Religious king and defender of Buddhism). After Gushri Khan, the Dalai Lama blessed and gave titles to the other Mongols. In turn, the Mongols gave their own titles e.g. Dzasa, Ta Lama, Dayan, Teji etc, to the Dalai Lama's officials. After touring U'stsang, Gushri Khan left for Kokonor where his Qosot tribe had decided to settle down on their newly acquired land.

Things would have been quiet for sometime had not Donyod Dorjee, the Bonpo king of Beri sent a secret message to Karma Tenkyong Wangpo regretting the defeat of the Chogthu Mongols and making a fresh scheme of raising an army in Kham to completely eliminate the Gelugpas. The letter also asked Karma Tankyong Wangpo to raise a similar army to make sure that no trace of Gelugpas remain in Tibet. It further blamed the statue of Jowo (Lord Buddha) in Tsuglag Khang for the ceaseless sectarian wars and suggested that the statue should be thrown in the Kyichu river. But Beri had always been under Gelugpa observation whose many spies kept a close watch on the attitude and plans of Donyod Dorjee and his strategy regarding the tumultous situation of Lhasa and U's. The letter containing the insidous message fell into the hands of Gelugpa spy. He at once sent it to Gushri Khan in 1638. Gushri Khan acted fast and gathered his army once again and awaited further instructions from Lhasa regarding his plan of finishing off both the Beri chief and Desi Tsangpa. The Dalai Lama discussed the development and the Qosot chief's decision to fight both the Beri chief and Desi Tsangpa with his Chadzod Sonam Chophel. The two differed in their assessment and approach to the new situation. The fifth Dalai Lama opposed further disturbance and unnecessary bloodshed in the country. He opined that the Desi Tsangpa is no longer persecuting Gelugpas and pointed out that it was the Gelugpa's own fault in refusing an audience to the late Depa Tsangpa with the Fourth Dalai Lama Yonten Gyatso which lay at the root of their attack on Sera and Drepung. The Dalai Lama further pointed out that what Gelugpas and *Gaden Phodrang* have achieved so far was more than enough and did not consider it necessary for him to compete with Nedong Gongma, Desi Tsangpa

or the Jonangpa sects, causing a lot of suffering to the people and the country. But Chazod Sonam Chophel disagreed. Being politically ambitious and extremely devoted to the idea of a greater Gelugpa supremacy, he showed that the Tsangpa rulers were staunch anti-Gelugpa forces under whom the Gelugpas have been persecuted for long. He declared that the whole country can no longer be entrusted in the hands of different chiefs and religious leaders but should be politically united under the central rule of a single person who can assure peace throughout the country. Taking the new developments into consideration, Chazod Sonam Chophel said that in Gushri Khan the Gelugpas had the strong supporter whom they have always wanted and maximum advantage must be taken of the political opportunities now available. But the Dalai Lama was not convinced of the political significance latent in the events coming into shape. The message which was sent to Gushri Khan after this discussion was terse. Gushri Khan was requested to destroy the Beri chief Donyod Dorjee who had always been a pain in the neck for the Buddhist religion in Kham and return to his country as the Dalai Lama did not desire further disturbance and bloodshed. Nowhere did the message refer to the destruction of Desi Tsangpa and concluded on a peaceful note of inviting Gushri Khan's two queens and other pilgrims on a visit to Lhasa and U's. But before the messenger left Lhasa with the letter, Chazod Sonam Chophel personally instructed him to convey his own message to Gushri Khan which made the Dalai Lama, a gifted poet, wonder in his autobiography if his "tune of the flute" had been changed into "a song of the arrow" by Chazod Sonam Chophel, whose secret message to Gushri Khan, was in time to change the whole structure of the country and its history.

After receiving the letter of the Dalai Lama and the message of Chazod Sonam Chophel, Gushri Khan recruited a number of troops from the Parik tribe in Amdo into his army and then marched into Kham, easily defeating the fragmentary Beri tribes on the way. Donyod Dorjee was a tough chief whose hatred for the Gelugpa made him still tougher. He did not give up easily and held out against

Gushri Khan for almost a year. If Karma Tenkyong Wangpo had any foresight, he could easily have attacked Gushri Khan from the rear and saved not only Donyod Dorjee but also his own life. But as history would have it, Donyod Dorjee was captured and put to death in the winter of 1640, and the Buddhist lamas, monks, officers and laymen of Gelugpa, Karmapa, Drugpa, Drikhungpa and Taglungpa imprisoned in Beri were released.

The news of Gushri Khan's victory over the Beri chief reached the Dalai Lama in 1641 while the whole of Lhasa was busy celebrating the new year *Monlam* festival. The Dalai Lama thought that the Qosot chief will now return to Kokonor. But to his shock, Gushri Khan marched towards U's Tsang. When questioned, Chazod Sonam Chophel confessed to the Dalai Lama that he had secretly instructed the messenger to tell Gushri Khan that the Dalai Lama would not object to his attacking Karma Tenkyong Wangpo to make the way clear and clean for the Gelugpas. Indeed, "the tune of the flute" had been changed to a "song of the arrow." A bewildered Dalai Lama lamented Chazod Sonam Chophel for taking such liberty and decided to personally dissuade Gushri Khan from the coming fight with Depa Tsangpa. But Chazod Sonam Chophel vehemently defended his stand and argued that it was suicidal to stop Gushri Khan from advancing since a show down with the Desi Tsangpa was now inevitable. Even as the Dalai Lama and his Chazod Sonam Chophel were heatedly arguing over the issue, a messenger from Gushri Khan brought a letter which stated that the Panchen Lama should be invited away from Shigatse since he was going to attack it.

This letter of Gushri Khan declaring war on Desi Tsangpa abruptly ended the strong disagreement between the Dalai Lama and Chazod Sonam Chophel. At once, the safety of Panchen Lama in Tashi Lhunpo monastery in the coming fight between Gushri Khan and Desi Tsangpa, the latter of whom might use the Panchen Lama to his advantage, began to loom over Lhasa. As it would be difficult to invite away Panchen Lama without arousing the suspicion of Karma Tenkyong Wangpo, Chazod Sonam Chophel wrote a letter in

which he informed the Panchen Lama that Gushri Khan, on his way back to Kokonor had sent his two queens to a pilgrimage of U's Tsang. But the sick senior queen who is unable to travel further than Lhasa, wishes to be blessed by the Panchen Lama. On receiving this message, Panchen Lama Lozang Chosgyan immediately set out for Lhasa. At the meantime, Desi Tsangpa Karma Tenkyong Wangpo had received a message from the Taklung Kagyud monastery that Gushri Khan was marching towards Tsang. Quite alarmed by the shocking news, Karma Tenkyong sent his men who intercepted the Panchen Lama at Rinpung and asked him to return to Tashi Lhunpo. But the Desi Tsangpa changed his mind and wrote a letter to the Panchen Lama asking him to stop the advance of Gushri Khan on Tsang which has now been confirmed. The Panchen Lama met Gushri Khan and tried his utmost to stop him from advancing on Shigatse but did not succeed in convincing the Qosot Mongol chief from discontinuing his campaign to destroy the Desi Tsangpa. Behind the obstinate refusal of Gushri Khan to give up his mission to destroy Karma Tenkyong Wangpo and his Kagyud supporters was Chazod Sonam Chophel, now at the threshold of fulfilling his dream of cutting the Tsangpa ruler to size. He journeyed to the north to meet Gushri Khan. After appointing a capable and high-ranking Gelugpa official Tardongnay as the guide to the Mongol Khan, Chazod Sonam Chophel returned to Lhasa escorting the two Mongol queens.

Karma Tenkyong Wangpo, who remained secure in his Shigatse fort in 1641 even when his ally Donyod Dorjee of Beri was being hunted and crushed to defeat and death, now actively started organizing his defence. Troops were kept on guard at the borders of his province. The best fighters were kept in Shigatse and a huge stockade was erected around the fort and Tashi Zilnon monastery of Karmapa, thus preparing for a defensive battle against the Mongols.

Scared and subdued by the rumoured invincible military might of the Mongols, Gushri Khan met few resistance from the scattered smaller districts on his way to Shigatse. And in the footsteps of the Mongol army followed Sonam Chophel and his Gelugpa accomplices who took over each and every

province of Tsang that paid allegiance to the Desi Tsangpa. But the final defence prepared by Karma Tenkyong Wangpo at Shigatse itself was remarkable. Though the Mongols surrounded the Tsang fort and Tashi Zilnon from all the nearby hills, the deadly accuracy of the Tsangpa archers kept the Mongols at bay, absolutely preventing entry into the fort. The best the Mongols could hope for was the gradual surrender of the fort due to shortage of food and water or the capture or assassination of Karma Tenkyong Wangpo himself by one miracle or another. When this grim situation was reported to Chazod Sonam Chophel by his spies, he was panic stricken and rushed to the Dalai Lama for mediation confessing that he had never expected the Desi Tsangpa to put up such stiff resistance against the Mongols. An angry Dalai Lama now rebuked Chazod Sonam Chophel and asked how would they mediate when they themselves started the war. He pointed out that even if he succeeded in mediating and bringing peace between the Desi Tsangpa and Gushri Khan, the former would take his revenge on the Gelugpas as soon as Gushri Khan left Lhasa. Reminding Chazod Sonam Chophel for overlooking the might of Desi Tsangpa, the Dalai Lama said that there was no choice but to go ahead with the war. If Gushri Khan comes out victorious, it was good. Otherwise, the Dalai Lama told an astounded Chazod Sonam Chophel, "we shall have to leave Lhasa and find some other country to live in".

Badly shaken by the Dalai Lama's fatalistic and uncompromising analysis of the situation, Chazod Sonam Chophel intensified his own efforts to emerge victorious from this struggle. With the help of monks from Sera, Drepung and other smaller monasteries, he attacked and captured in one day the Dongkar fort, a Tsangpa stronghold in U's. Other smaller zones under the Tsangpa hegemony automatically surrendered. No longer able to keep up the pretense of his neutrality Chazod Sonam Chophel openly marched into Tsang with a large troop of army and joined Gushri Khan, giving much needed supplies and weapons to the Mongols. Fresh catapults to throw huge stones on the Tsangpa fort were erected. After frequent attacks to gain entry into the fort, most of

which were repulsed with rocks and arrows from the high walls of the stockade, the Desi Tsangpa showed the first feeble sign of relenting. He finally sent messengers to Panchen Lama and the Karmapa Lama to mediate and arrange a truce, but nothing came of this as Chazod Sonam Chophel had openly entered the theatre of war at the head of the U's force. After prolonged struggle and intensive fighting, both the Tsangpa fort at Shigatse and the Tashi Zilnon monastery were captured. Karma Tenkyong Wangpo with his family and retinue were taken prisoners. The fall of the Desi Tsangpa, the capture of Tashi Zilnon and the imprisonment of Karma Tenkyong Wangpo in Neu in Lhasa with his two ministers Bongong and Gangshungpa was celebrated in Lhasa by the monks of the three monasteries by hoisting prayer flags and offering incense.

After his victory over the Desi Tsangpa, Gushri Khan invited the Dalai Lama to Shigatse. Received by six hundred Mongol cavalrymen, important officials of U's, Tsang and Tod, monks who lined the streets and common people who performed folk dances, the Dalai Lama proceeded to Tashi Lhunpo monastery amidst pomp and splendour. The actual ceremony of offering of *Mendel Tensum* (Long Life Mandala) took place in the audience hall of the Shigatse place, where the Dalai Lama seated on the highest throne received the symbolic offering of the gold image of Buddha, a book of scriptures and a small stupa representing the body, speech and mind of the Buddha, from Gushri Khan who was seated on a lower throne by the side of Chazod Sonam Chophel. After the *Mendel Tensum* ceremonies, the 61 year old Gushri Khan proclaimed the Dalai Lama as the supreme ruler of the whole of Tibet from Tachienliu in the east upto Ladakh border in the west. He also proclaimed Chazod Sonam Chophel as the *Desi* (regent) of the Dalai Lama who would be responsible for the political administration of the country. For the first time, in the history of the nation, the Dalai Lama assumed both the spiritual and secular rule of the whole of Tibet. Returning to Lhasa, the Dalai Lama stopped at Drepung and made a proclamation declaring that henceforth Lhasa would be the

capital of Tibet and the Government would be known as *Gaden Phodrang,* the name given to the Dalai Lama's own residence at Drepung by the Second Dalai Lama. The Fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Losang Gyatso then promulgated public laws of moral conduct, appointed various governers to the different districts and selected intelligent and able ministers to form the first government of *Gaden Phodrang Choglas Namgyal.*

Karma Tenkyong Wangpo, the last Tsangpa ruler was now imprisoned at Neu in Lhasa. But his followers were still active. Garpon Yapse, a follower of Karmapa led a revolt against the *Gaden Phodrang* and attacked Gyantse which they took over from the Lhasa backed officials. Inspired by this victory, a major revolt occured in Kongpo where Gelugpa monasteries including Zingchen were put to the torch. Gushri Khan and Desi Sonam Chophel regained Gyantse and marched on Kongpo, killing over 7000 Kongpo rebels and capturing many more. From some of the prisoners, Gushri Khan's men procured the rebels' plan of overtaking *Gaden Phodrang* and imprisoning, executing or replacing many of its officials with Tsangpa and Karmapa supporters. This so enraged Gushri Khan that he at once issued order to execute Karma Tenkyong Wangpo and his two ministers. Accordingly, Desi Tsangpa Karma Tenkyong Wangpo was fully wrapped and sewed up in leather and thrown into the Shigatse river. With his execution, the Tsangpa uprising collapsed and the rebels dispersed as they had now lost the focal point of their struggle. Thus ended the last vestige of Desi Tsangpa and came the dawn of the Dalai Lamas. The wealth of the late Desi Tsangpa accumulated and kept in Shigatse was offered to the Dalai Lama. Tashi Zilnon, the Karmapa monastery near Tashi Lhunpo was vigorously dismantled. All the planks of this monastery were carried to Lhasa to replace the worn out floors of Tsuglag khang in Lhasa. Most of the objects of rites and rituals were given to Tse Namgyal Dratsang. Many of the smaller Karmapa monasteries were forcibly turned to Gelugpas. As a result, the Tenth Karmapa Chosnying Dorjee escaped to Kongpo Phende monastery via Lhod-

rag. Establishing contact with the local chiefs and monasteries, the Tenth Karmapa organised a successful uprising which took over many areas in Tsang and Lhoka, endangering the very foundation of the newly instituted government of *Gaden Phodrang*. As such, Gushri Khan's son Tenzin Dalai Khan lead a combined Mongolian-Tibetan army which suppressed the uprising, overtaking many monasteries and scattering the Karmapa monks in the different Gelugpa monasteries. So vehement was the suppression that the Tenth Karmapa, bereft of any hope, escaped into the land of Jang Satham Gyalpo. This was the last recorded effort of the Tsang and its Karmapa establishment to regain what they had lost. From then on, the Fifth Dalai Lama began his rule.

The Fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Losang Gyatso, backed by the armed might and solid faith of the Mongol Gushri Khan and the political foresight and ambition of his attendent Desi Sonam Chophel, succeded in unifying the whole of Tibet and giving it a coherent and systematic shape. A man of great learning, the Dalai Lama proved himself to be an excellent Sanskrit scholar and a metaphoric poet of great repute. At a time when religious fanaticism and sectarianism dominated the Tibetan political, social and spiritual life, the Dalai Lama adopted as broad and non-sectarian an attitude as the circumstances permitted. Although brought up and trained in the Gelugpa tradition, the Fifth Dalai Lama kept and consulted a number of teachers from the Nyingmapa, Kagyud and Sakyapa sects much to the dislike of many of his Gelugpa supporters. Not only in the field of spiritual matters, but also in politics, administration and diplomacy the Dalai Lama left his distinct mark. Kings of neighbouring kingdoms like Sikkim, Nepal, Ladakh and Indian states sent their representatives to Lhasa to honour the inauguration of Gaden Phodrang in 1642. Sikkimese history records that the Dalai Lama assured full assistance and support to Phuntsok Namgyal (1604-1644), the firt king of sikkim when needed.

After starting the construction of the magnificient Potala palace in 1645 on the ruin of Tritse Marpo first founded by Srongtsen Gampo for his Nepalese queen in A.D. 636, the Dalai Lama instructed Desi Sonam Chophel to take census of

the country. While the Tod and Tsang census were taken in 1643 by Desi Sonam Chophel, the province of Kham were compiled by the two officials Lakhangpa and Bagdro in 1648. Based on these census, new taxation laws were introduced.

Political relations with neighbouring countries was by and large cordial and peaceful. In China, the Ming dynasty was overthrown by the Manchus in 1644. Being devout Buddhist, the Shunchi emperor of China constantly kept inviting the Dalai Lama to China from 1649 to 1651. The Dalai Lama finally accepted the invitation and visited China as the independent spiritual and temporal ruler of Tibet. All historical records including the Chinese agree that the Dalai Lama was shown the greatest respect and recognition by the Manchu emperor as behind the Fifth Dalai Lama stood the military might of the Mongols. After a grand tour of Peking and China, the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa in 1653 via Amdo and Kham. After the death of the Shunchi emperor, the Manchu throne was succeeded by the K'ang Hsi emperor who urgently requested the Dalai Lama in 1665 to appoint a Tibetan representative in Kokonor to control the fiery Mongols who were harrassing the Chinese border towns incessantly. The Dalai Lama not only appointed a representative but reached an agreement according to which the Mongols will cease harrassing the Chinese border towns and the trade between the Chinese and Mongolians will resume. In 1674, We san-kuei, prince of Yenan rebelled against the K'ang Hsi emperor who requested the Dalai Lama to send Tibetan and Mongolian troops to put down the revolt of the dissident prince. The Dalai Lama in a letter to the K'ang Hsi emperor pointed out that the Tibetan soldiers, not used to the heat of China, will prove ineffective and the Mongols, though excellent fighters, will prove a source of great harm than gain if they run out of control and both might succumb to the epidemic of small pox than plaguing China. Instead, he sent two Tibetan officials to observe and obtain first hand information on the actual conditions then prevailing in China. No sooner had the Emperors' envoy and the Tibetan ministers left, rival envoy from the Yenan prince arrived in Lhasa to seek the Dalai Lama's assistance. Though the

Tibetan ministers requested the Dalai Lama not to grant them an audience, the Dalai Lama saw the importance of treating all foreigners as equal and granted them an audience during which he gave them the same reasons for refusing military assistance as he had earlier conveyed to the emperor.

With the Mongols, the Dalai Lamas have always been very popular ever since the Third Dalai Lama converted Altan Khan to Buddhism and the Fourth Dalai Lama was born to Mongolian parents. Even at the worst of times when the Chogthu Mongol chief sent his son Arsalang with 10,000 Mongolian soldiers to wipe out Gelugpas from Tibet at the request of Desi Tsangpa Karma Tenkyong Wangpo in 1635, Gushri Khan was able to convince Arsalang of the senselessness of opposing the Dalai Lama and exterminating his followers. The solid faith of the Mongols in the Dalai Lama formed the foundation stone of the Gelugpa success in Tibetan history. And at the hands of Desi Sonam Chophel who manipulated and blended with such subtlety, skill and intricacy the charisma of the Dalai Lama with the military might of the Mongols to achieve the supremacy of Gelugpas over all the other sects, the Karma Kagyud and their supporters Depa Tsangpa saw utter defeat, destruction and death after long and dedicated defence. And in many ways, the Dalai Lama's influence over the Mongols was what really strengthened and added a special significance and magnificence to the *Gaden Phodrang* government which compelled even the Manchu emperors to concede a political respect and recognition to the Fifth Dalai Lama denied to many. In turn, the Dalai Lama had a great love and compassion for the warlike Mongols whose devotion to the person and institution of the Dalai Lama always remained fresh and deep. Seeing the great necessity of maintaining the unity of Mongolia, the Dalai Lama twice sent representatives to Mongolia asking the various Mongol chiefs to unite. The first representative was sent in 1659 when as a symbol of their obedience to the Dalai Lama, the Mongol chiefs of both Tibet and Mongolia gave him their oaths sealed with their personal seals, vowing to live in unity. In 1674, Dalai Kungteji was again sent as the Dalai Lama's representative asking all the chiefs

in Mongolia to reaffirm their unity.

Bhutan, by far, presented the most problem during the Fifth Dalai Lama's regn. The Bhutanese soldiers harrassed many Monpa Buddhist monasteries in Tawang who paid allegiance to the Dalai Lama. After a thorough investigation of the situation by Gushri Khan and Desi Sonam Chophel, seven hundred Mongol and Tibetan soldiers were sent to help reinforce the Monpa soldiers in 1645. But the high temperatures and dense forests of Bhutan sagged the Mongolian and Tibetan troops used to fighting on the high mountains. Very soon they were surrounded by the Bhutanese who captured a number of important Tibetan and Mongolian officials, shattering the myth of the invincibility of the Mongolian soldiers. In 1646, an agreement was reached with Bhutan by which the later agreed to pay its annual rice tax (*Lochak*) to *Gaden Phodrang* which they formerly paid to Depa Tsangpa. But this agreement was temporary. Fighting again broke out in 1647 when Tibetan troops from Phari came as far as Paro capturing a Bhutanese fort on the way. But under the cover of night, the Bhutanese suddenly attacked the Tibetans who made a hasty and disgraceful retreat leaving most of their things at the hands of the Bhutanese soldiers, still preserved in a fort near Paro.

Again in 1657, Chosje Namkha Rinchen, a Bhutanese chieftain who maintained a close relationship with Tibet was murdered alongwith twenty of his family members in Bhutan. Once again Tibetan troops marched into Bhutan, but the result of this campaign remains hazy. By 1675, the agreement reached between Bhutanese and Monpas had expired. The Monpas spread a rumour that the Bhutanese were about to attack them. Once more a Tibetan army marched into Bhutan for the third time and put Tendong Dzong to torch. Though negotiations took place, no agreement was reached. As a result trade between Bhutan and Tibet came to a halt and the trade route at Phari and Tsona were closed. In 1676, Bhutanese attacked Sikkim and captured Chumbi valley. Again Tibetan army marched on the Bhutanese who withdrew from Sikkim giving up Chumbi valley. The Panchen Lama played an important role as the peace keeper of Bhutan

and Tibetan relations ever since 1623, when the First Panchen Lama visited Bhutan.

Tibetan relations with Ladakh strained when Delek Namgyal, the Ladakh king harrassed Gelugpa monasteries in Ladakh and sent troops to attack some western Tibetan districts. Gaden Tsewang, a son of Dalai Kungteji was appointed the commander by the Fifth Dalai Lama and sent against Ladakh with a large number of Tibetan and Mongol soldiers. Initial fighting took place at Purang after which the Ladakhi soldiers entrenched themselves in the forts which proved difficult to capture. Gaden Tsewang unhesitatingly marched into Ladakh bypassing the forts and reached Baspo, the capital where king Delek Namgyal had taken refuge in the fort. The whole city was under the seige of Tibetan and Mongol army. The Ladakhi king appealed to the Moghul king of Kashmir for military intervention. Fearing that a long protracted war might ensue, a negotiation for peace was called. Sixth Drukchen Rinpoche Miphan Wangpo (1641-1717), a great lama of Bhutan mediated between Ladakh and Tibet. Guge, Purang and Rudok areas were restored to Tibetan jurisdiction and the Ladakh king agreed to send his triennial presents (*lochak*) to the Tibetan government. The treaty of 1684 demarcated the border between Ladakh and Tibet and remained effective for many years. One hundred Mongol troops were stationed at the border for future peace and Gaden Tsewang returned to Lhasa in triumph.

Sikkim kept its peace with Tibet and maintained its respect for the Dalai Lama intact. Tensung Namgyal (1644-1670) who ascended the throne after the demise of his father Phuntsok Namgyal visited Lhasa to personally convey his respect to the Dalai Lama and to seek advice in introducing the sixteen Tibetan code of law in Sikkim.

Nepal in its turn created problems on the Tibetan Nepal border in 1661 and a number of Tibetan troops under the command of Tashi Tsepa, Gyangdrogpa and Mechangpa marched to drive the Nepalese soldiers away. But they were to come again and with a greater force and impact.

Because of such border conflicts and problems the Dalai

Lama attached special importance to the security of the nation. Especially in the province of Kham, Golog, Tachienliu, Chatring, Gyalthang and Jolpa, bureaus were established with duties to reduce taxation, mediate local feuds, establish monasteries and resettle areas that have been abandoned by the people. Besides, the Dalai Lama established two standard academies one each for the monks and lay officials where they were trained in Mongolian, Sanskrit, astrology, poetry, archery and horsemanship in addition to the usual religious and administrative subjects. The Dalai Lama revived the tradition of wearing the ancient customs of the early Tibetan kings known as *Rinchen Gyancha* (Precious Ornaments) introduced by the Nedong hegemony which had faded out of fashion during the Rinpung and Tsangpa supremacy. This *Rinchen Gyancha* became a Tibetan new year custom right till 1950. Not only that, by the new year of 1672, the Dalai Lama had introduced the standard uniform for Tibetan officials who till then wore a variety of Mongolian and Chinese costumes and also finalised in writing a system of seating during state ceremonies according to status and seniority.

Gushri Khan, the faithful Mongolian chief who persued the welfare and growth of Gelugpa sect and the Dalai Lama into the power that established itself as the *Gaden Phodrang* with remarkable fanaticism and foresight, died at Lhasa in 1655, at the age of seventy three. In 1660, his two sons, Tashi Batur and Tenzin Dayan Khan divided the Qosot realm. Tashi Batur went to Kokonor while Tenzin Dayan Khan remained in central Tibet. A year after the death of Gushri Khan, Desi Sonam Chophel died. But his death was concealed for over a year due to the unstable political condition of the country. With the death of these two men who were so crucial in shaping the history, nature and personality of Gaden Phodrang, the Dalai Lama lost two of his most courageous and faithful supporters. In 1662, the ninety one year old Panchen Lama Losang Chosgyan passed away in Tashi Lhunpo. His reincarnation was discovered in Tsang Topgyal in 1665 and was given Getsul ordination by the Dalai Lama in Lhasa.

After the death of Desi Sonam Chophel, Trinley Gyatso

was appointed Desi in 1660. Both the second Desi and Tenzin Dayan Khan, Gushri Khan's son died in 1680. Losang Thutob was appointed the third Desi by the Dalai Lama and Konchog Dalai Khan succeeded his brother. But Losang Thutob, though a monk had a mistress descending from the Nedong family. Due to the scandalous nature of this relationship, the third Desi resigned and left Lhasa for his estates in Zangri. The Dalai Lama then asked Sangay Gyatso (1653-1705), a very young monk to be the fourth Desi. But he declined the offer on the ground of his youth and inexperience. Therefore his uncle Lozang Jinpa was appointed the Desi till 1679 when the 27 year old Sangay Gyatso came of age. Though most of the persons appointed Desi after Sonam Chophel passed away insignificantly in the history of Tibet, Desi Sangay Gyatso was destined to leave his mark on the country and its history. Four years after Sangay Gyatso became the Desi, the Dalai Lama passed away in 1682, at the age of sixty eight. And Desi Sangay Gyatso, the man who shared the full confidence of the Dalai Lama was to begin his extraordinary and sometimes bizzare odyssey on the stage of Tibetan history.

2

Tsanyang Gyatso: The Unique Dalai Lama

"White Crane!
Lend me your wings
I will not fly far
From Lithang, I shall return, "

So wrote a desolate and lonely Tsanyang Gyatso, the Sixth Dalai Lama, to a girl friend of his in Shol town in 1706, when he was forcibly being taken away to China by the Mongol and Manchu soldiers of Qosot Lhazang Khan — away from his people and the Potala palace. No one at the time understood the message of the song nor did suspect that the young Dalai Lama had decided to end his earthly manifestation and yield the Tibetan spiritual and temporal realm to the care of the next Dalai Lama. But when that very year the sad and shocking news of the "dissapearance" or more probably the "murder" of Tsanyang Gyatso at Gunganor lake spread across the Tibetan landscape, the secret meaning of the last of his many songs dawned on a grief stricken and bewildered Tibetan masses who dearly longed for his presence during a turbulent turn of Tibetan history, and anxiously looked towards Lithang for the next reincarnation.

The short and tragic life and loves of the Sixth Dalai Lama has defied definition and conjured up strange inspirations and misconceptions in the minds of millions throughout the centuries who find delight in his songs, nostalgia in his loves and tragedy in his brief role as the Dalai Lama, the supreme spiritual and temporal institution of the Tibetan nation.

As Tsangyang Gyatso was a Delai Lama, many find it difficult to understand his seemingly dissolute life, his many loves, his wine songs and above all, his escapes from

the precincts of Potala to Lhasa and Shol towns where tavern maids and mistresses eagerly awaited his arrival and presence. So remote was Tibet and still more so the fabled city of forbidden Lhasa with its magnificient Potala and the divine Dalai Lamas that fertile and imaginative Western minds eagerly indulged in creating fantasies about the distant Lhasa and the mystic Dalai Lamas. From among these, the rumoured life-styles of the Sixth Dalai Lama known in European circles through the writings of Ippolito Desideri and other missionaries became in the early 1830s the subject matter of a two volume anti-religion novel entitled *Mahaguru* by a German radical-liberal writer named Karl Gutzkone. Partly misinformed by *Mahaguru,* Karl Marx, in a leading article in No. 179 of the *Kolnische Zeitung,* cited the institution of the Dalai Lama as an example of totalitarian theocracy representing god on earth.

However, young Tsangyang Gyatso was recognised as the Dalai Lama, and brought up to suit the institution in a difficult and conflicting time under abnormal circumstances by extremely ambitious politicians. In an attempt to partially comprehend his ambiguous and extraordinary history, it is necessary to evaluate the events and the diverse but dominating personalities who have been crucial in their influence and guidance on the life and time of Tsanyang Gyatso. Foremost among them was Desi Sangay Gyatso.

Trained in both secular and spiritual matters by Fifth Dalai Lama and his uncle Desi Trinley Gyatso, Sangay Gyatso, popularly referred to as "Desi Goleb" (flat-headed regent) was an ambitious man of wide interest and excellent scholarship. His numerous works on history, medicine, astrology and music and rhetoric etc. won him scholarly recognition and his accuracy in archery and musical talents, especially on the *Piwang* (Tibetan lute), endeared him to his friends and the people alike. A tireless and efficient administrator. he regularly paid personal visits to the numerous courts and offices under his supervision. Conscious of the needs and aspirations of the common people, Desi Sangay Gyatso often visited the *chang* (Tibetan beer) shops and public places in masquerade to gather opinion on his administration. Of

his numerous disguises, there is a story that once the Desi in masquerade questioned a monk *Dob-dob* for the latter's opinion on the Tibetan government. Promptly, the *Dob-dob* told the disguised Desi: "*Deba-shung* is the concern of *Desi Goleb*. Our concern is to drink the *chang* hidden under my bed". Not only in the administration of the country, but also in the cultural activities of his century, Desi Sangay Gyatso was a foremost contributor. A great lover of learning and a skilled administrator, Desi Sangay, on the other extreme was a lover of wine, women and music who turned unsrupulous, scheming and ruthless when his own power seemed to be in danger of slipping away.

Though the Fifth Dalai Lama passed away in 1682, this fact was concealed from the people, Mongol chiefs and the Manchu emperor by Desi Sangay Gyatso for about 15 years. It was announced by the Desi that the Dalai Lama had retreated into meditation for an indefinite period while within the inner precincts of the Potala Desi Sangay went to great lengths to guard the secret closely. It is also said that the Dalai Lama himself wished his demise to be kept secret as he feared that the news might hinder the construction and completion of the Potala palace then underway, and enable and encourage the Manchus to infiltrate and sow seeds of dissensions among the various Mongol tribes around Kokonor who owed their total allegiance to the Dalai Lama and protected the Tibetan empire from the Manchu clutch.

Whatever justifications in the reasons forwarded by the Desi for concealing the demise of the Dalai Lama, the Lhasa administration was admirably maintained in the normal and usual way to impress people and visitors alike that all was well and fine. Rituals signifying the Dalai Lama's meditation were daily performed. Meals were taken into the chamber as usual. The Dalai Lama's seal was used on all official transactions. On important occasions, the Dalai Lama's ceremonial gown was placed on the throne in the audience hall and all officials followed the routine as though the Dalai Lama was physically present. However, when important Mongol devotees and princes arrived from Mongolia to pay their respects to the Dalai Lama, the Desi could

not refuse them audience outright. At such critical times, an elderly monk named Depa Deyrab from *Namgyal Dratsang,* who slightly resembled the Fifth Dalai Lama in appearence, was made to receive the guests in the ceremonial robe, an eye-shade and a hat, most probably to conceal the fact that the imposter lacked the baldness and piercing round eyes of the late Dalai Lama. Placed in such extraordinary circumstances, it required the ruthless genius of one of the most intelligent Tibetans to keep such an important secret for so long. When sometimes the monk from Namgyal Dratsang, scared of his unusual role and bored with his forced imprisonment, tried to escape from the Potala, Desi Sangay entreated, assaulted and most often bribed the monk to stay to fulfill his unusual role of imposting as the Fifth Dalai Lama. In his frenzied determination to maintain the secret, Desi Sangay Gyatso was said to have silenced both the medium of Nechung Oracle Tsewang Palber and the latter's sister for getting wind of the secret during the Desi's frequent consultations with the oracle in the nerve wrecking suspense of running the Tibetan political show without the presence of the Dalai Lama.

It would be an unfair judgement on Desi Sangay Gyatso to maintain that his only interest in keeping the Dalai Lama's demise a secret was to prolong his personal rule. For immediately after the Fifth Dalai Lama's passing away, the Desi had started the search for the discovery of the reincarnation and had despatched trusted officials to various parts of the country, who pretended to be in search of reincarnations other than that of the Dalai Lama.

In 1685, one search party reported that an extraordinary son born supernaturally to father Rigzin Tashi and mother Tsewang Lhamo on 1st March, 1683, in the land of Mon (Tawang) seemed to be the reincarnation of the late Dalai Lama, as the child had successfully stood all the preliminary tests performed by Choyje Zilnon Dorjee Chang. A happy Desi Sangay secretly consulted the oracles to determine if the Mon boy was the true reincarnation. When his own consultations proved auspicious, Desi ordered the child and his mother to be transferred to Tsona under very strict secrecy.

Misunderstanding the purpose of Desi's order for strict secrecy, the Tsona officials kept the boy and the parents under virtual house arrest for a long time.

When the child was 14 years old, they were transferred from Tsona to Nakartse under tight security. Arriving in Nakartse in April of 1697, both the parents and the child were received in the mansion of Yardok Khripon, an uncle of the Fifth Dalai Lama. In the same year, Nyimathang Shabdrung Ngawang Zhonu, a trusted minister of the Desi was sent to the Manchu imperial court in Peking to make an official report of the demise of the Fifth Dalai Lama and the discovery of the Sixth to the K'ang Hsi emperor. In August of the same year, Desi's ministers announced the long concealed secret of the passing away of the Fifth and the discovery of the Sixth Dalai Lama. Taken by total surprise, grateful elder Tibetans thanked and prayed for the long life of the Desi, who according to them, shouldered alone the burden of the demise of the Fifth Lama and did not let the people lament "the setting of the sun" but only rejoice "in its rising" now that the Sixth Dalai Lama had already been discovered. Only a few sceptical officials complained that the secret had been concealed for so long. In the same manner, the news was made known to the other parts of Tibet. That a secret of such dimension could be kept for so long without letting the administration suffer any serious damages goes to prove the skill and drive of Desi Sangay. But the secret, once known to all the parties concerned, became the main cause and cornerstone of the Desi's downfall and foreign infiltration in Tibetan politics.

In September 1697, Desi Sangay Gyatso invited the Second Panchen Rinpoche Losang Yeshi (1663-1737) to Nakartse. The young incarnation from Monyul received *Getsul dompa* (vow of renunciation) from the Panchen Rinpoche who named the boy Losang Rinchen Tsanyang Gyatso. After appointing a secretary, chamberlain and other attendants befitting service to the high post of the Dalai Lama, the whole retinue left Nakartse. Reaching Nyethang after six days, Desi Sangay Gyatso with a large number of state officials and abbots and monks of Sera, Gaden and Drepung

offered *Mendel Tensum* to Tsanyang Gyatso before a huge gathering of the local people. After the offering, Desi Sangay made a detailed report in front of the whole assembly, from the instruction of the Fifth Dalai Lama to conceal his demise to the discovery of the Sixth Dalai Lama under extraordinary circumstances in Monyul. From Nyethang, Desi Sangay led the whole retinue to Lhasa bringing joy to the heart of the people who were eager to see their spiritual and temporal leader, the Sixth Dalai Lama, arrive at the Potala palace.

In October of the same year, when the cold Lhasa winter set in with its icy weather, preparations were made for enthroning the Dalai Lama. Attended by officials of the government, monks from the three monasteries, Mongol princes, representatives of the K'ang Hsi emperor and Lhasa populace, Tsangyang Gyatso was enthroned as the Sixth Dalai Lama amidst grand pomp and show. Elaborate religious ceremonies, invoking the prosperity, progress and peace in the country were performed for days on end. From his throne in the Potala palace, Tsanyang Gyatso saw the concern with which the Desi instructed stupas to be built in different parts of the country such as Tsoka, Gyalthang, Dartsedo etc. and prayers to be said in every monastery for the well being of the new Dalai Lama and the country. With the enthronement finally over a long period of spiritual training, under the supervision of the Panchen Rinpoche, Desi Sangay himself and the other selected teachers lay ahead of the young Dalai Lama.

Losang Rinchen Tsanyang Gyatso, the newly discovered Dalai Lama, was born to a reputed Nyingma tantric family descended from the famed *Terton* (Treasure text finder) Pema Lingpa of Bhutan (1450-1521). A tall, hand some, talented and intelligent youth, his love of archery and the carefree outdoor life was stronger than the strict training of a monastic surrounding. Though the learned Desi himself trained the young Dalai Lama in the religious and political world, and invited the Panchen Rinpoche and other selected Lama scholars to tutor him, Tsanyang Gyatso's love of the outdoor life daily took him to the nearby parks and

valleys in Lhasa, practising archery with his friends and enjoying the charm of nature. All the same Tsanyang Gyatso was not a spoilt and arrogant youth. On the contrary, he was a simple and austere personality who disdained pomp and show, preferred walking to riding horses and disliked large ceremonial retinues led by the grand Chamberlain. Even in the Potala, Tsanyang Gyatso is said to have led a simple life without keeping any servants, making his own tea and sharing it with anyone who would come to receive his audience and blessings. When he was required to give a discourse as part of his training he gave them in public places and parks in Lhasa, and not in the magnificent Potala or other grand monasteries. Though known for his carefree attitude towards his monastic training, Tsanyang Gyatso was given to intellectual persuits and to composing of learned treatises on various subjects. An excellent architect, Tsanyang Gyatso embellished and beautified the Norbu Lingka palaces besides building the *Lukhang* at the back of the Potala, which became a prominent landmark of Lhasa landscape.

To Desi Sangay Gyatso, the young Dalai Lama turned out to be an enigma. Despite their best efforts to train him as a monk befitting the sacred position of the Dalai Lama, Tsanyang Gyatso turned out to be a carefree and apparently frivolous character who viewed his mentor's efforts, not with appeal but with irritation and dislike. As the young Dalai Lama had reached 20 years, the Desi requested him time and again to take the *Gelong vow,* the final initiation and consecration into monkhood, and refrain from squandering his precious time in carefree wanderings day and night. The Desi even mentioned his plan to invite the Panchen Rinpoche from Tashi Lhunpo to bestow the Gelong vow. But Desi Sangay's instructions fell on deaf ears as Tsanyang Gyatso showed no enthusiasm whatsoever for the coming initiation into total monkhood.

Desi Sangay Gyatso, who could no longer bear the burden of Tsangyang's irresponsibility, wrote a detailed and diplomatic letter to the Panchen Rinpoche in May 1702, asking him for his revered intervention to persuade the young Dalai Lama to take his *Gelong* vow, which he had delayed

taking for so long under various pretexts. Getting wind of the Desi's letter to Panchen Rinpoche and perhaps in an effort to avoid the arrival of Panchen Rinpoche in Lhasa at the Desi's secret invitation, Tsanyang Gyatso suprised the worried Desi by expressing his intention to journey to Tashi Lhunpo to receive the final initiation into monkhood. In great haste, Desi Sangay Gyatso arranged the journey. Accompanied by a number of important monk and lay officials, Tsanyang Gyatso left Lhasa for Tashi Lhunpo to meet his tutor.

The Desi's detailed letter and the rumours of Tsanyang Gyatso's behaviour had apparently worried the Panchen Rinpoche. When the latter was informed of Tsanyang Gyatso's journey to Tashi Lhunpo for the final consecration into monkhood, the Panchen Rinpoche though ailing, travelled for some distance from Tashi Lhunpo to welcome his pupil and escort him to the monastery. But the young Dalai Lama did not proceed straight to Tashi Lhunpo monastery with his tutor and instead took his residence in Zimkhang Gyaltsen Thonpo at Shigatse town.

The Panchen Rinpoche, time and again, met Tsanyang Gyatso and earnestly tried to make the young Dalai Lama realise his plain duty 'towards religion and the living beings". In this effort to reform the adamant Tsanyang Gyatso, the Panchen Rinpoche was supported by a number of influential lamas and nobles sent by the Desi. This retinue included Demo and Sumpa incarnates, Tagtse Shabdrung, Qosot Mongol prince Lhazang Khan (brother of Vangjal, the Qosot "ruler" of Tibet) and the abbots of Sera, Gaden and Drepung.

As fate desired, a disappointment was in store for the Panchen Rinpoche, Desi Sangay Gyatso and the select members of the retinue. Though it is difficult to judge and state the precise intention of the young Dalai Lama in undertaking the journey to Shigatse, final initiation and consecration into monkhood does not seem to have been the main idea behind it. The young Dalai Lama appalled the Panchen Rinpoche and the retinue by revealing his intention to give up the novice monkhood vows which he had earlier received from the Panchen Rinpoche in 1697, instead of taking the

final vows for which he had purposely made the journey. After prostrating thrice before the Panchen Rinpoche and begging forgiveness for not being able to fulfill the wishes of the honoured tutor, Tsanyang Gyatso renounced his *Getsul* vows and returned to the state of a layman. For a Tibetan brought up in an age of religious revival and near-total fanaticism, it must have called forth an extraordinary courage on the part of the young Tsanyang Gyatso to renounce his *Getsul* vows before no less a personality than the second Panchen Rinpoche and deviate from the traditional practices followed by every Dalai Lama, before and since the Sixth. Yet his rejection of the monkhood vows did not amount to an abdication from the position of the Dalai Lama. He maintained the temporal prerogatives of the Dalai Lama.

Bewildered and disturbed by this totally unexpected development, the abbots of the three monasteries, Lhazang Khan and Desi Taktse approached the young Dalai Lama and pleaded with him not to renounce the *Getsul* vows for the sake of the faith and country. But their appeals were of no avail. Tsanyang Gyatso remained firm in his decision not to resume the monkhood vows. Hearing that Tsanyang Gyatso was passing through Shigatse, Panchen Rinpoche invited him to visit Tashi Lhunpo once again in 1704. But Tsanyang Gyatso did not stop at Shigatse nor did he visit Tashi Lhunpo. He knew well that his revered tutor will plead with him to resume the monkhood vows forsaken by him two years ago.

From the day he renounced his *Getsul* vows, Tsanyang Gyatso dressed as a layman mostly in light blue silk and brocades, kept his hair long and wore a number of striking rings on several fingers. Though he continued to live in the Potala, he often wandered to Lhasa, Olga, Chongyay and Gongkar etc. Enjoying the newly gained freedom of lay-life, Tsanyang Gyatso spent most of his time enjoying archery at the back of the Potala with his friends with whom, as dusk fell, he would visit Lhasa and Shol town, spending the nights in the taverns, drinking *chang* and singing love songs. Though Lhasa and Shol taverns were usually white in colour, some were later painted yellow. Popular belief

has it that the yellow taverns were the consecrated abodes where Tsanyang Gyatso met his lovers during his nocturnal visits.

None was more disturbed and depressed by Tsanyang Gyatso's unusual behaviour than Desi Sangay, who failed in his best efforts to train the young Dalai Lama. In his anger and desperation, Desi Sangay regarded bad company as the young Dalai Lama's degeneration. Added to usual administrative burdens of a complex time, the Desi found that an increasing number of Mongols and Tibetan clergy questioned the behaviour of the young Dalai Lama and were beginning to show signs of wavering faith. On the one hand, the Desi instructed his associates not to question the behaviour of the young Dalai Lama, the incarnation of Avalokiteshvara, while on the other hand, he intrigued and conspired with his associates Dapon Gachakpa, Darjungnas, Drungyig Tenzin Wangpo and Apho Ngazom, to ambush and kill Dungkhor Thargyasnay—the closest friend of the young Dalai Lama, whom they assumed arranged Tsanyang Gyatso's rendezvous with girls, and was responsible for his degeneration and irresponsibility.

One night when Tsanyang Gyatso and his friends returned to the Potala, singing loudly after their archery practice, the Desi's handpicked associates suddenly attacked them. Fortunately for Thargyasnay, earlier that evening, Tsanyang Gyatso had insisted that he himself change dress with the servant, and as a result, Thargyasnay was dressed in Tsanyang Gyatso's attire while the servant wore Thargyasnay's clothes and Tsanyang himself was dressed as the servant. In the sudden ambush and ensuing confusion, the servant was killed mistaking him to be Thargyasnay. Realising their blunder, the ambushers attacked again and wounded Drungkhor Thargyasnay. The news of the incident spread like wildfire and the very next morning the whole of Lhasa was brimming with the incident. An enraged and beleagured Tsanyang Gyatso consulted the *Lamo* oracle who revealed the indentity of the assasinators. Abo, Ngazom was disgraced publicly by parading him around Lhasa city on a burning copper horse. The others involved were legally executed.

Discovering the Desi's hand behind the plot, Tsanyang Gyatso remained aloof from and annoyed with the Desi, for whom he had lost much of his respect as he came to know the Desi from close quarters.

While Tsanyang Gyatso was rebelling against the rigid discipline and rigorous training forced upon him in his role as the highest incarnation of Tibet by renouncing his monkhood vows and taking a layman's lifestyles, the whole country was in the grip of a storm of power struggles, and a whirlwind of political intrigues resulting from the Desi's liaison with the restless Mongol chief Galden Khan of Dzunger tribe and his estrangement with Lhazang Khan, who assumed full leadership of the Qosot Mongols after poisoning his brother Vanjal Khan. Tsanyang Gyatso's behaviour added further fuel to the already lit flame of the disastrous struggle. If by concealing the death of the Fifth Dalai Lama, the Desi succeeded in maintaining the allegiance of the faction ridden Mongol tribes who fought the Manchu empire for regaining the Tibetan territories lost in war, the Desi incurred their suspicion and wrath by revealing the secret he had guarded for fifteen long years, and discovering a reincarnation who was outrageous in his role as the Sixth Dalai Lama.

By his dubious alliance with Galden Khan, the impatient chief of Dzungar Mongols of Ili valley, the Desi had alerted the suspicion of the Manchu emperor of China who took a keen and renewed interest in Tibetan political affairs. Had Desi Sangay Gyatso followed the restraining policy of the Fifth Dalai Lama in his dealings with the various Mongol tribes, the K'ang Hsi emperor would not have been bothered. But by inculcating the friendship of the Dzungars, the Desi was aiding a potential rival of the Manchus, who viewed the rising power and kingdom of the Dzungars with concern and feared that the religious influence of the Dalai Lama might rally the whole of Mongolia leading to their unification under Dzungar leadership, and threaten the very foundation of the Manchu empire. Therefore, it became necessary for the K'ang Hsi emperor to observe Tibetan political development closely and bid for his chance to gain a strategic foot-

hold in Tibet as soon as the opportunity offered itself.

For quite sometime, the Mongol tribes around Kokonor were showing signs of increasing disunity. This was keenly observed by the K'ang Hsi Emperor. Seeing the nascent disunity among the Mongols, the Manchu emperor took the opportunity to poison the ears of the Mongol tribes like Chahar, Qosot etc. against each other and the Tibetan government of Desi Sangay Gyatso. On the Chahar tribes, the emperor showered titles and gifts. To the Qosot, he pointed out Desi Sangay's clandestine attempt to undermine Qosot influence by seeking Dzungar support. The emperor also accused the Desi of keeping the secret of Fifth Dalai Lama's demise for so long merely as a ploy to prolong his personal power. Due to such effective Manchu infiltration and intrigue, the dominant Mongol tribes, viz. Chahar, Qosot and the Dzungars were soon completely divided among themselves. The Qosots, who once, under the leadership of Gushri Khan Tenzing Choygyal had helped the Fifth Dalai Lama to consolidate power and unify Tibet, now lost interest in safeguarding the Tibetan territories when they learnt that the Fifth Dalai Lama had long passed away.

Desi Sangay Gyatso was in a painfully difficult situation. The Sixth Dalai Lama had turned out to be the opposite of what he had hoped for and he could no longer rule effectively in the latters' name. His rather unwise liaison with the Dzungars had estranged his relationship with the Qosot, whose chief Lhazang Khan, was a man of energy and ruthless determination with the sole dream of reviving the defunct Qosot power in Tibet which his grandfather Gushri Khan had enjoyed. Forced by circumstances the Desi resigned from active administration in 1703 and formally appointed his elder son Ngawang Rinchen to the regentship. This, however, was a political maneouvre. In practice, complete power rested with the ex-Desi Sangay Gyatso whose relationship with Lhazang Khan further deteriorated. Sensing the mounting antagonism and rising strength of Qosot, the ex-Desi attempted to poison Lhazang Khan and his minister to death but they were saved from the effects of the poison by Jamyang Shadpa (1648-1722) of Drepung Gomang college. The

latent power struggle flared up and during the *Monlam* festival of 1705, Sangay Gyatso once again plotted to seize and assassinate Lhazang Khan. This plot could not be carried out as it was opposed, among others, by Jamyang Shadpa and the abbots of the three monasteries, who reminded the ex-Desi of the kindness of Qosot Gushri Khan, grandfather of Lhazang, who had helped the Fifth Dalai Lama in consolidating his hold over the country.

The growing antagonism between Sangay Gyatso and Lhazang was creating a tense situation ripe for confrontation. As a device to save the country from the ravages of an imminent clash, the *Lamo* oracle commanded Lhazang Khan to leave for Kokonor. Not being able to oppose the oracle's command, Lhazang Khan started for Kokonor. Stopping on the banks of Nagchu for sometime he gathered his tribesmen and in 1705 marched back on Lhasa to confront the ex-Desi in a show of arms. Seeing the coming catastrophy, the abbots of the three monasteries interceded and the Panchen Rinpoche personally wrote to Lhazang to refrain from the bloody confrontation. Lhazang did not issue a flat denial to the request of the Panchen Rinpoche and abbots, but expressed his desire to resume his march as far as Langdong near Lhasa.

On the other hand, ex-Desi Sangay Gyatso flatly rejected any suggestion of a compromise and concentrated his forces from U'sTsang, Tod Ngari and Kham areas in Lhasa. Instead of leading his troops to check Lhazang's advance on the capital, Abar Sangay Gyatso concentrated and kept his troops in Lhasa, awaiting for Lhazang to advance unhindered. This was a mistake as the Tibetan troops were reduced to fight, at the best, a defensive battle. The mistake proved to be fatal for the ex-Desi.

On reaching Langdong, Lhazang divided his army into three coloumns. The Khan himself headed the left coloumn advancing on Lhasa from the east passing through Gamotran. The centre coloumn was led by Tugus Jaisang, the Mongol commander who led his troops from the north on Lhasa passing through Phenpo Gola. The right coloumn was under Lhazang's wife Gyalmo Tsering Tashi, who

planned to storm Lhasa from the west by way of Tolung valley.

The decisive battle took place on the Phenpo Gola pass where the ex-Desi's commander Dorje Rabten was killed by Mongol Jaisang. A stone-cairn to chase away demon was erected as Dorje Rabten was reborn there as a wrathful evil spirit. Soon afterwards, Abar Sangay Gyatso was totally defeated with a loss of 400 men and had to accept the unconditional terms of the Qosot chief. Lhazang Khan took over the Lhasa administration and Sangay Gyatso journeyed to Gongkar Dzong in retirement. Unfortunately for the ex-Desi, Gyalmo Tsering Tashi harboured a personal grudge against him. At her command, Sangay Gyatso was captured on his way to Gongkar dzong and beheaded on 6th September, 1706, at Tohlung Nangtse, the hill near the monastery of Kyomulung. It is said that Jamyang Zhadpa and other abbots of the three monasteries could have saved the life of Sangay Gyatso. But they came by the longer route and reached the scene of execution just minutes after the beheading. Though Lhazang himself did not appear to have a hand in the murder of Sangay Gyatso, it is said that Drungkhor Thargyasnay secretly wrote to the Khan asking him to execute the ex-Desi. The Tibetans deeply regretted the tragic and ignominous way in which Sangay Gyatso died since he was one of the most able administrator and accomplished scholar who shouldered the burden of Tibetan affairs for so long. But there was nothing they could do under the superior strength of the Khan. Following the execution of the ex-Desi, his associates and supporters were closely watched. The regent Ngawang Rinchen was soon captured and later sent to China in the retinue of the Sixth Dalai Lama.

Lhazang Khan's successful defeat of Sangay Gyatso left him in full control of the administration. In this venture, he was supported by a number of prominent Tibetans. Among them was Pholanay Sonam Topgyal, a young Tibetan official from Tsang who was to play a significant role in Tibetan history. Now that the regent had been removed, and Sangay Gyatso executed, Lhazang's next rival was the

Sixth Dalai Lama himself. As the office of the Dalai Lama is a delicate institution, it naturally demanded extreme tact and skill to handle this operation, especially when the Dalai Lama had to be deposed from power right in front of the Tibetan eyes. However, as later events showed, Lhazang completely failed to understand the Tibetan psychology and misjudged the love and devotion which the Tibetans, both monk and lay, held for Tsanyang Gyatso.

As a first step towards deposition of the Dalai Lama, Lhazang Khan tried to gain the goodwill of the three monasteries by donating estates to them. He also tried to court the favour and support of Panchen Rinpoche by sending his wife to visit Tashi Lhunpo with rich presents and gifts in 1705. Not only that, the Khan sought external support from the Manchu emperor for his limited military power. The K'ang Hsi emperor was only too willing to give both moral and military backing to the Qosot king of Tibet in order to keep in check the Dzungar Mongols from drawing the Dalai Lama to their side.

Unfavourable reports, greatly exaggerating the activities of the Sixth Dalai Lama, were drawn up by Lhazang Khan and sent to the Manchu emperor. Soon both the emperor and Lhazang were impatient to depose the Dalai Lama. Yet not being certain of the Tibetan reaction to such a sacriligious affront to their highest institution, Lhazang waited for an opportunity to offer itself. The K'ang Hsi emperor sent his Manchu lieutenant Hsichu to aid Lhazang in sending the Dalai Lama to China. Later, through the incarnate lama Chagney Dorje of Koko-qoton, positive orders to arrest and send the Dalai Lama to China were released by the emperor. Fearing strong Tibetan resentment and reaction, Lhazang Khan could not depose the Dalai Lama straightaway. But being convinced of the necessity of removing the Dalai Lama for the consolidation of his own power, Lhazang called a meeting attended by the leading monastic officials and presided over by Tri Rinpoche Dondrub Gyatso. In this meeting, Lhazang announced that Tsanyang Gyatso should be deposed as he was unworthy of his position and office. Although Lhazang urged, he

failed to elicit an unanimous agreement to his plan from the Tibetan side. Nevertheless, Lhazang summoned Tsanyang Gyatso to his court and, reciting in detail his failings and vices, ordered him to leave for the Mongol military camp situated at Lhalu near Lhasa. He also despatched his soldiers to collect the personal belongings of the Sixth Dalai Lama from the Potala palace. The Tibetan people greatly resented this action and expressed their resentment by closing their shops and gathering in a large crowd round the Lhalu garden where the Dalai Lama was being kept under heavy guard by the Mongol troops. Led by the monks of three monasteries, the large crowd pushed forward to have a glimpse of the Dalai Lama but were driven back by the troops who used arms on the protesting and panic stricken people. On 27th June, 1706, Lhazang declared the Dalai Lama deposed. The imperial envoy from China conveyed the emperor's summons to Tsanyang Gyatso. As the young Dalai Lama started on his last journey, he was followed by a large crowd of monks and lay people, who requested the Gaden Tri Rinpoche to lead them in their struggle to rescue the young Dalai Lama from Mongol-Manchu captivity. When near Drepung, the crowds pressed too close, they were violently driven back by armed Qosot soldiers. In a desperate move, the angry and unarmed crowd attacked the escort with sticks and stones, and succeeded in rescuing the Dalai Lama whom they triumphantly brought to his summer palace in Drepung monastery. The very next day, the monks consulted the *Nechung* oracle who declared Tsanyang Gyatso to be the true reincarnation of the Fifth Dalai Lama and added that "whosoever would deny it is beset with devilish delusions." The oracle's statement was greeted with joy and enthusiasm by the Tibetans, who became determined to defend the Dalai Lama to the last.

Angered by strong Tibetan reaction against his infamous declaration and deposition of the Dalai Lama, Lhazang sent his well armed troops to Drepung the very next day and surrounded the monastery with artillery, preparing to set the monastery aflame. A desperate resistance was put up by the unarmed monks, led by the Tri Rinpoche but it was of no

avail before the trained and armed Qosot soldiers. When the Dalai Lama saw that a massacre was bound to occur because of him, he stepped out of Drepung monastery with a few friends and advanced towards the Qosot troops. When his few friends fell fighting to the last, the Dalai Lama placed himself in the hands of the Qosot. Drepung, however, was sacked and looted for protecting the Dalai Lama. Tsangyang Gyatso was once again taken on his journey to China. Reaching Gunganor, a small lake to the south of Kokonor, Tsanyang Gyatso "disappeared." Written Chinese and Tibetan sources mention that he 'died' of illness. But rumours of the time preserved by Desideri and other missionaries in Lhasa presume that the Sixth Dalai Lama was "murdered."

After his unpopular act of deposing the Dalai Lama, Lhazang Khan commited an outrageous mistake that was to cost him his rule over Tibet. To the utter shock and dismay of the Tibetan people, Lhazang appointed a young monk named Tulku Yeshi Gyatso, born to a beggars' family in Tsawa Pagshod, from Kham as the "real" Sixth Dalai Lama.

Historically, the Sixth Dalai Lama "died" or was "murdered" at Gunganor on 14th November, 1706. But according to the *Secret Biography of the Sixth Dalai Lama,* his "dissappearence" at Gunganor was the beginning of a very secret and curious spiritual adventure. After making secret pilgrimages to central Tibet, Kham, India and Nepal, the Sixth Dalai Lama finally arrived at Alakshaya, a far north country of Mongolia where he introduced the *Monlam Chenmo* of Lhasa. The very next year, he secretly visited Peking. In 1724, he was said to have conducted the death rites in honour of the First Jetsun Dampa Ondur Gegen at Urga and established and consecrated the monastery of Jargud Thossam Dargyas Ling. If his years in Lhasa have been clouded with political intrigues, unrest and his own seemingly libertine way of life, the latter or the "secret" part of his life seems equally devoted to the propagation of Buddhism in Mongolia. According to this version, Tsanyang Gyatso passed away in 1746, forty years after his "dissappearence" from Gunganor lake.

It is of significance to note here that on the life and the

"secret" life of the Sixth Dalai Lama, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama told Sir charles Bell: "He (the Sixth Dalai Lama) did not observe even the rules of a fully ordained priest. He drank wine habitually. And he used to have his body in several places at the same time, e.g. in Lhasa, in Kongpo and elsewhere. Even the place where he retired to the Honourable Field (death) is uncertain. One tomb of his is in Alashar in Mongolia, while there is another in the Rice Heap (Drepung) monastery. Showing many bodies at the same time is disallowed in all the sects of our religion, because it causes confusion in the work.

One of his bodies used to appear in the crowd in the Reception Hall of the Seventh Dalai Lama. One is said to appear also at my reception, but I am unable to say whether this is true or not."

Whether Tsanyang Gyatso is the true reincarnation of the Fifth Dalai Lama was a question decided for the Tibetans of his time by the Nechung oracle whom the monks and the people consulted before his final arrest by Lhazang's troops in 1706. Because of Lhazang's defamatory reports regarding the behaviour of Tsanyang Gyatso, the Manchu emperor was said to have sent his own wisemen to examine Tsanyang Gyatso. After prolonged and careful examination, the emperor's wisemen reportedly declared that the youth manifested all the signs of a Bodhisattva.

Legend has it that Desi Sangay Gyatso, while praying for the speedy reincarnation of the departing Fifth Dalai Lama, requested him to make the institution of the Dalai Lama hereditary in order to save the country from the unnecessary administrative wastage and complications created by the interregnum of the Dalai Lama's demise and his rediscovery, during which regents usually rule. The Fifth Dalai Lama, according to the legend, was said to have assented to this request and instructed the Desi that his reincarnation should be allowed full freedom to behave as he desired, without any objection or obstruction. References to a sweetheart born in the valley of Chungay are found in several songs of the Sixth Dalai Lama. Tibetans widely beleive that had Tsanyang Gyatso met his sweetheart from Chungay, the son would have made

the Dalai Lama institution hereditary and Tibet would have become invincible to any foreign power. But it is believed that due to the general deterioration of Tibet's collective virtue, Tsanyang Gyatso never met the girl from Chungay. Whatever the basis of this legend Desi Sangay Gyatso did not keep his promise of letting the Sixth Dalai Lama do as he wanted since it was the Desi who subjected him to the monastic training against which Tsanyang Gyatso had rebelled with such dogged determination. Another interesting fact is that although the Sixth Dalai Lama abandoned his monastic training and gave up his monkhood vows, he never rejected the temporal office of the Dalai Lama and continued to reside in the Potala palace. After all, there is no hard and fast rule that a Dalai Lama must think and behave in a particular tradition. The choice is left to the Dalai Lama himself and Tsanyang Gyatso chose a less common path.

Possibly Desi Sangay's own dissolute attachment for the mundane and sensual pleasures of soft music and beautiful women is responsible for the twist and turn of Tsanyang's life. It was common knowledge in the then Lhasa that no beautiful lady was safe from the Desi's amorous approach, some of whom later interfered in his administrative role. The Desi's loose ways cost him many of his most trusted friends, who deserted him when he did not reform at their repeated requests. A song attributed to Sixth Dalai Lama reads:

> Do not tell me
> "Tsanyang! you are dissolute,"
> Just as you desire pleasure
> I, too, desire pleasure and comfort."

Here he is addressing the Desi, who, despite his own behaviour, was trying to correct Tsanyang Gyatso all the time.

Tibetan scholars give Tsanyang's affairs with his sweethearts a tantric light and raise it above the usual affairs of ordinary human beings. Many scholars, both Western and Tibetan, attribute a second tantric meaning to his mundane activities. Some claim him to be the centre of a secret Nyingma tantric cult who indulged in dubious tantric-sexual practices. Be that as it may, it goes without saying that

Tsanyang Gyatso was unique not only among the Dalai Lamas but also among most of the spiritual leaders of world history in that his ambigous behaviour did not destroy the faith of the Tibetans, who continued to love him dearly and worship him with stainless faith. Born and bred up in a Nyingma family advanced in tantric practices, it was, perhaps, unwise on the part of Desi Sangay Gyatso to force the strict Gelugpa training on the youth, who proved to be an uncomfortable and controversial blend of the two.

Whatever controversy later historians see in his life and time and whatever doubts later generations cast on the Sixth Dalai Lama, the depth of Tibetan love and faith in him came to the fore when the Manchu emperor declared the Lithang child Kelsang Gyatso, not as the Seventh but as the Sixth Dalai Lama thereby implying his rejection of Tsanyang Gyatso as a true reincarnation. The Tibetans gallantly ignored the emperor's order by addressing Kelsang Gyatso, who fulfilled the prophecy of Tsanyang's last song by "returning from Lithang," as the Seventh and not the Sixth in his line.

Leaving aside the unfortunate politics that surrounded his desolate life, Tsanyang Gyatso, the *Ocean of Melodious Song,* brought to holy Lhasa some of purest and most beautiful lyrics of all time. Great as a lover of wine and women, melodious as a singer of timeless love songs and equally tragic, if not more so, as a national hero having the status of a Dalai Lama, the highest incarnation of Central Asia reduced to a heroic pawn in the hands of the Qosot Lhazang Khan, Tsanyang Gyatso became a legend within his short life span. Living as the source and centre of power in a power hungry time, Tsanyang Gyatso led an insecure and desolate life in constant fear of the scheming Lhasa court. Justice, which he did not attain in his lifetime, he hoped to achieve in his death. One of his songs says:

Yama, the mirror of my *karma*
Residing in the realm of death
You must judge and grant justice
For, while alive, I had no justice.

3

1717: The Year of the Locust

The Dzungar Invasion of Tibet

After the turbulence and shameless power struggles caused during the lifetime of Tsanyang Gyatso, mainly by Desi Sangay Gyatso and Lhazang Khan, both of whom, in their own ways, used and abused the person and institution of the enigmatic Sixth Dalai Lama to achieve their own political aims of ruling Tibet, the Tibetan stage seemed ready for a major catastrophe. And Lhazang Khan, ever ambitious and increasingly impetous in his approach and policies did not ease the tension and fury of the times. In fact, the ignominous steps which he persued after deposing the Sixth Dalai Lama much to the consternation and distress of the Tibetans were indeed like the sparks that set the prairie on fire. Yet when the Dzungar invasion finally knocked down Lhazang Khan and his joyless rule of 13 years over Tibet, it came with the suddenness and fury of a violent storm that took Lhazang and Lhasa unaware and unprepared into one of the most nightmarish and ghastly invasions in Tibetan history. Though Lhazang considered the Manchu emperor his ally and consulted the Manchu court on the various aspects of his Tibetan rule, he was left alone before the wrath of the Dzungars who originally fought with the pure Mongolian fury of avenging Lhazang's desecration of the institution of the Dalai Lama and assassination of their ally Desi Sangay Gyatso. Yet the degenerated Dzungar invasion led by Tsering Dhondup proved that Lhazang Khan, for all his offences, was not as cruel and devastating as the conquerers whose indiscriminate killings, rape, loot and arson left the holy Lhasa a beleagured city crying for solace

and peace which many hoped will descend with the arrival of the Seventh Dalai Lama. As prophesied in one of his last songs that he will "return from Lithang," faithful Tibetans as well as Mongolians alike looked towards the lonely Lithang highlands of Kham, where they heard an extraordinary child had taken birth to fulfill the prophesy contained in the famous song of the Sixth Dalai Lama.

As a matter of fact, in September 1708, two years after the "dissappearance" of Tsanyang Gyatso, a child was born in Lithang. The monks of the nearby monastery Thubten Jambaling, founded in 1580 by the Third Dalai Lama, saw the wonders of the child and at once recognised it as the Seventh Dalai Lama and true reincarnation of Gyalwa Rinpoche Tsanyang.

The news of the birth of the Lithang child, now named Kelsang Gyatso, and his recognition as the Seventh Dalai Lama spread far and wide. Several of the Qosot Mongol princes of Kokonor, who had great sympathy with the fate of the Sixth Dalai Lama, decided to offer recognition and protection to the newly discovered reincarnation. In 1712, two of the foremost Qosot princes of Kokonor, descendants of Gushri Khan Tenzing Chogyal, openly supported the recognition and extended their protection.

The birth, discovery, recognition and proclamation of the Lithang child Kelsang Gyatso as the reincarnation of the Sixth Dalai Lama was pregnant with significance and repercussions for the various Mongol tribes around Kokonor, the Manchu emperor of China and most of all for Lhazang Khan, the grandson of Gushri Khan and the last Qosot ruler of Tibet.

After beheading the regent Sangay Gyatso in 1705, declaring the Sixth Dalai Lama a fraud and deposing him, Lhazang Khan had usurped the whole Tibetan government with the support and goodwill of the K'ang Hsi Manchu emperor. Having eliminated Gyalwa Tsanyang Gyatso from the scene, Lhazang was faced with the peculiar and intricate problem of finding the "real" Sixth Dalai Lama. Without taking into serious consideration the strong Tibetan religious sentiments and the stainless devotion and faith with which the

monks of three moasteries, especially Drepung, guarded and fought for the release of Gyalwa Tsanyang Gyatso, when he was briefly taken into Qosot custody in 1706, the Khan persued a totally miscalculated and unacceptable step by putting forth an ordinary monk named Tulku Yeshi Gyatso from the Chagpori Medical College, as the true reincarnation of the Fifth Dalai Lama, and in 1707, forced the Second Panchen Losang Yeshi Pal Zangpo to enthrone the monk from Chagpori as the Sixth Dalai Lama in the Potala palace under the title of Ngawang Yeshi Gyatso.

Though none dared to openly defy Lhazang's puppet Dalai Lama, even his firm supporter and mentor, the Manchu emperor delayed his approval, knowing that, in this, Lhazang had gone too far. For his open denunciation of Tsanyang Gyatso and enthronement of an ordinary monk in the former's place, even the aristocracy, who otherwise supported him showed their dislike and sometimes even open hostility. Although the Sixth Dalai Lama had proved himself to be an extraordinarily odd Dalai Lama, the Tibetans including the clergy beleived him to be the Sixth Dalai Lama and strongly resented any outside interference with the sacred and precious mode of the succession of the institution of the Dalai Lamas. Helpless in the face of superior force, the Tibetans tolerated Lhazang's puppet Dalai Lama imposed on them, but in their heart, they did not accept the puppet as the incarnation of Chenrezi, the Buddha of Compassion, and longed for the day when the Lithang child would arrive in their midst.

How grievously Lhazang Khan had miscalculated in his policy of enthroning a puppet Dalai Lama became clear when the whole of Kokonor became restless with the various Mongol princes, many of whom were from the Qosot tribe and related to Lhazang, openly expressed their resentment and disgust at his action and showed undisguised hostility towards him and his puppet Dalai Lama, in whose name he ruled Tibet.

Starting with the strong and devoted bond of spiritual and secular friendship between the Fifth Dalai Lama and Gushri Khan, the prince and chief of Qosot Mongols, a spe-

cial relationship and attachment had grown between the various Mongol tribes and the Dalai Lamas of Tibet. When the grandson of Gushri Khan and their cousin prince Lhazang Khan had trampled on the sacred institution of the Dalai Lama by deposing one and appointing another at his own free will, the Kokonor Mongol princes were filled with indignity and anger. Therefore, in 1708, when the fame of the Lithang child, predicted by the Sixth Dalai Lama in one of his delightful songs asking a white crane to take him to Lithang from where he intended to return spread throughout the length of Tibet, the Kokonor Mongol princes were the first to rush to the child and his father with offers of recognition as well as protection.

Confident in the justice, if any, of his policy Lhazang Khan remained more or less indifferent to the news of the Lithang child and its recognition as the Seventh Dalai Lama, circulating in Lhasa and other parts of the country. But when several of the greatest Qosot princes of Kokonor extended their recognition and protection and Nechung, the state oracle supported the Lithang child as the true reincarnation, Lhazang Khan was rudely shaken out of his misplaced confidence in the puppet Dalai Lama and arrogant indifference towards the Lithang child, now becoming a direct challenge and threatening the very foundation of his rule over Tibet, so far carried under the name of a false Dalai Lama.

Being unable to connive at the news of the discovery of the Seventh Dalai Lama, Lhazang Khan sent some of his officers to investigate the Lithang child. Toeing Lhazang to the letter, they declared the Lithang child to be a fraud too. But the Kokonor Mongol princes, determined in their opposition to Lhazang's false Dalai Lama and also jealous of his exalted position in Tibetan affairs with the backing of the Manchu emperor, continued their support and protection of the Lithang child. Troubled by the tenacity with which his cousin Mongol princes were upholding the Seventh Dalai Lama, Lhazang sent a Tibetan and Mongol general, to investigate. The Tibetan general, as an effort to save the child from harm, declared that it did not matter whether the child

was a reincarnation of Tsangyang Gyatso, as the latter had been declared an imposter by Lhazang's order. When night fell, the Tibetan general visited the child's father and advised him to take the child to a safe place as he was impressed with the extraordinary qualities of the child Kelsang Gyatso. In 1714, the Lithang child left for Derge under the security of Derge and Mongol troops.

Having protected the Lithang child from 1712 onwards, the Kokonor Mongol tribes were at a loss, not knowing what course to pursue. Many assemblies were called and the issue, in all its dimension, was discussed. Direct military action against Lhazang Khan was considered several times, but was prudently abandoned in favour of a pledge to protect the Lithang child and await for the Manchu emperor to support the recognition of the child. But the Manchu emperor planned to keep the Seventh Dalai Lama in his hand as a pawn in reserve, as Lhazang failed to impose his Dalai Lama on the Tibetan clergy. With such farsightedness, the Manchu emperor ordered the Lithang child and his father, now in Kokonor, to be brought to Peking for further investigation. But a faction of Qosot Mongol princes rebelled against the emperor's order and the journey was called off on the ground that the Lithang child was too young for the journey. As unrest and talks of military attacks were rampant, both Lhazang Khan in Lhasa and K'ang Hsi emperor in Peking took military precautions. But no war broke out. Neither with Lhazang Khan nor among the Kokonor Mongols themselves who fell into factions, some supporting the Manchu emperor's summon of the Seventh Dalai Lama to Peking while other sections strongly opposed it.

While the events described above were taking place around the Lithang child Kelsang Gyatso, an unexpected event of great consequence was being shaped in the council of Tsewang Rabten, the chief of Dzungar Mongols, the last of the rising nomad empires of Central Asia in Ili valley. The Dzungars, perpetually at war with Manchu China, had observed the course of Tibetan politics since Lhazang Khan's ascent with keen interest and concern. They also realised the full significance of their religious relationship with the

Dalai Lamas of Tibet. If obtained to fruition, this relationship between the highest Buddhist spiritual authority personafied by the Dalai Lama and Dzungar Buddhist monarchy of Ili valley, implied Dzungar hegemony over the rest of the Mongol tribes whose faith in the Dalai Lama was total. This very implication of the union between the Dalai Lamas of Tibet and the Dzungars of Ili valley was also realised by the K'ang Hsi, that skilled and farsighted Manchu emperor who had gained the loyalty of the various Mongol tribes occupying strategic military positions and supplying the emperor with a considerable number of troops. He knew that the very foundation of his empire was threatened once the Dzungars obtain the Dalai Lama to lead them. When the late regent Sangay Gyatso adopted a pro-Dzungar policy and entered into closer friendship with Gaden Khan (1676—1697), the then ruler of Dzungars as a check against Manchu and Qosot influence in Tibetan affairs, the K'ang Hsi emperor, with a definite plan to weaken Dzungar influence in Tibet and keep the various Mongol chiefs disunited, extended his strong support to Lhazang Khan and kept a vigilant eye on Tibetan politics.

A near war situation always prevailed between Manchu China and the Dzungars. Each side was spying on the other to gain tactical and strategical advantages for the decisive struggle ahead. Tsewang Rabten (1697-1727), the new chief of Dzungars, observed with alarm the increasing Manchu influence and control over Tibet through Manchu alliance with Lhazang Khan. Besides, the Manchu emperor, for all practical purpose, had the rightful Dalai Lama as a pawn in reserve for an opportune moment. Both sides, the Manchus as well as the Dzungars, knew too well what it was to have a rightful Dalai Lama, as a pawn to rule over Tibet in harmony with the monastic establishment and more importantly as an unopposed factor of power and prestige in the Mongol world. Yet the only way in which the Dzungars could intervene and win Tibetan approval for their intervention was to restore to Lhasa its missing gem — the rightful Seventh Dalai Lama, then in Kubum monastery in Amdo, tightly guarded by the Manchu soldiers.

The first sign of future shock for Lhazang Khan came in the form of pleasant letter. In 1714, when Lhazang was busy launching a losing attack on Bhutan, he received a letter from Tsewang Rabten of the Dzungars proposing a marriage alliance between the two tribes. In his letter, Tsewang Rabten, a close relative of Lhazang Khan having married the latter's sister, offered his daughter in marriage to Gaden Tenzin, Lhazang's eldest son alongwith an handsome dowry. The Dzungar chief had known that his daughter was in touch with Gaden Tenzin who loved her and further proposed that the marriage should take place in his territory for which Gaden Tenzin should be sent to Ili valley to claim his bride.

A suspicious Lhazang Khan did not commit at once to the proposal. On the one hand he remained fearful of the Dzungar's real intentions, while on the other hand, he naively hoped for a strong political and military alliance with the Dzungars. But his son, learning of the marriage proposal, impatiently insisted on a quick and favourable decision so that he could journey to claim his bride. Not knowing how to decide in such a situation, Lhazang took recourse to divination and consulted the Lamo oracle. What the oracle recited during its brief trance were interpreted in different lights by Lhazang Khan and his son. While Lhazang interpreted that the journey would be dangerous and should be avoided, his son arrogantly insisted that it only signified there would be trouble if the marriage was postponed, and threatened suicide if he was not allowed to depart for Ili valley to claim his bride. The marriage took place in the same year. On the occassion of the royal marriage, Tsewang Rabten's demand in turn for an handsome dowry in cash and eight hundred soldiers was fulfilled by an unsuspecting Lhazang Khan. Having succeeded in deceiving Lhazang into a false sense of security by the marriage of their children and having obtained in advance eight hundred soldiers to be used against him soon after, Tsewang Rabten started taking other diplomatic and military measures for the coming confrontation.

A most fruitful and astute measure which the Dzungar

ruler undertook was in contacting with the high lamas of the three monasteries of Lhasa. Helped secretly by Dzungar lamas studying in Lhasa, Tsewang Rabten disclosed his plan to crush Lhazang Khan and restore the rightful Dalai Lama, the Lithang child to his see in the Potala Palace. His plan received the most enthusiastic and full-hearted support of the three monasteries, which presented, for all practical purpose, the public opinion of the Tibetan political life. The astute lamas, in turn, won over to Dzungar cause some of the ministers and retainers of Lhazang Khan by persuasion, pleas and bribery. Besides, they also added to Dzungar military force by secretly sending from the three monasteries, many young and strong monks, fully familiar with the country and hardened to the strain of military training in the highland desert wind of north-western Tibet.

After these military and diplomatic preparations, the Dzungars concentrated their intelligence and energy on their plan of invading Tibet. Tsering Dhondup, a cousin of Tsewang Rabten known for his military valour was appointed the commander. Under him were four able generals with an expeditionary force of six thousand men. From Khotan which was their base, they planned to march through north-western Tibet to the neighbourhood of Nagchuka, where they hoped to ambush Lhazang Khan at his summer resort. At the same time another smaller force of 300 men would surprise the Kumbum monastery and kidnap the Lithang child. Both the divisions were to meet at Nagchuka from where the Dzungars planned to escort the rightful Dalai Lama to Lhasa after crushing Lhazang Khan and enthrone the Seventh Dalai Lama. To keep the whole mission a secret, rumours that the Khotan force has been sent to help Lhazang in his long lost battles against Bhutan was deliberately spread.

While the Dzungars, after completing their diplomatic and military preparations had already embarked for Tibet, Lhazang Khan, now an easygoing old man addicted to heavy drinking, had left for a bathing cure at the hot springs of Olka. On the advice of his generals and councillors who were suspicious of Dzungar motives behind the marriage, Lha-

zang Khan returned to Lhasa. Soon after, Kanchenay Sonam Gyalpo, the governor or Tod Ngari Khorsum (Western Tibet) wrote to Lhazang Khan informing him that a Dzungar force of 5000 men were advancing around Ngari from Yarkand. An incredulous Lhazang Khan and his courtiers could not comprehend such depth of treachery on the part of their Dzungar relatives. Yet the Dzungars had already advanced around Ngari and Lhazang Khan was confused to hear a little later that 6000 Dzungar army had suddenly arrived in Nagtsang, proclaiming themselves as escorts of Lhazang's eldest son returning after the marriage in Ili valley. Half believing this report, Lhazang went with his retinue to his favourite pasture in Dam in June 1717 to receive his son and the "escort party" of Dzungars.

Before the Dzungar "escort party" arrived, Lhazang Khan's second son Surja had returned from Kokonor where he had married a princess. The marriage was celebrated in Dam in the company of his father. The Dzungars, due to the immense distance, failed to ambush Lhazang in his summer resort as originally planned but their strategical surprise was nevertheless complete. Lhazang Khan had been caught literally unprepared. Trying to rise to the occassion, Lhazang sent a reconnoitre party under the command of his general Asita to discover the true intentions of the Dzungars. Asita, after an hostile encounter with the Dzungar army was convinced that they were indeed advancing on them.

Pholanay Sonam Topgyal, who had earlier shown his courage and skill during Lhazang's war against Bhutan, went to Lhasa at Lhazang's biding. Within a very short time, Pholanay mobilised an impressive Tibetan army from central Tibet and large number of Tibetan troops, cavalry and infantry were concentrated in Dam with remarkable swiftness. Lhazang at once reported to the Manchu emperor that a Dzungar army of six thousand men have arrived in Tibet on 10th August 1717 under the command of Tsering Dhondup, who was marching against him. Lhazang Khan, did not, however, ask for military help from the K'ang Hsi emperor but instead summoned the respected Panchen Rinpoche to his headquarters at Dam, for at least the possibility of

negotiations if worst came to worst, as the Dzungars were fervent Gelugpas and their commander, Tsering Dhondup was once a student of the Panchen Rinpoche at Tashi Lhunpo.

Lhazang Khan's position at this juncture was bad. His own Qosot soldiers were few and the numerous Tibetan troops hurriedly assembled by the brilliant Pholanay were divided in their sincerity since the monks of the three monasteries had scant sympathy for Lhazang Khan and his puppet Dalai Lama. Superior and decisive leadership could have saved the situation but Lhazang Khan was no great leader. More than ever, he wavered in his decision and showed a lamentable lack of foresight and resolute leadership. The Dzungars, in turn, were tired after their long and ardous journey through Jangthang. They needed rest as they had arrived at Nagtsang in a state of complete exhaustion.

Before actual fighting began, Pholanay urged Lhazang to occupy Kudus, a mountain which dominated the countryside and promised a strong defensive position. But Lhazang's uncle arrogantly opposed Pholanay and insisted on the traditional and time-honoured Mongol way of fighting in the plains. Lhazang Khan remained indecisive in this while the Dzungars marched towards Dam and occupied the Kudus mountain unopposed. Lhazang and his men remained in their favourite pastures, a bad position for an army on the defensive.

Finally, battle was announced and fighting began. Troops charged ferociously at each other and close-quarter fighting became widespread. Pholanay showed his courage by rallying fugitives from Lhazang's unit which had given way. Lhazang was pleased with Pholanay's courage and promoted the latter to a commander. Throughout the two month's fighting during which Lhazang's men held the advancing Dzungar army, there was not a single great battle. Only violent but brief encounters drawn over lengthy periods. Yet Lhazang Khan realised only later that traitors inside his camp had let out strategic and tactical secrets to the Dzungars. Oronpa, a Kongpo officer of Lhazang Khan marched all night to capture a hill at the back of the Dzungar camp.

But when he ascended the hill, Dzungars, informed of his moves, were awaiting his arrival and he was immediately shot dead. Oronpa's death demoralised the Tibetan troops from Dagpo, Nyarong and Kongpo and they plotted to surrender arms and join the invading Dzungars. Pholanay, the new commander, unearthed the plot and succeeded with great difficulty in keeping the troops together. Traitors like Tagtsepa and others, who had sold the whole battle plan to the Dzungars, were seized and the whole plan completely revised and changed. But a more serious and dangerous Dzungar move was their propaganda, in which, they urged the Tibetans to return to their homes since the Dzungars had come to help the masterless and defenceless Tibetans by bringing the rightful Seventh Dalai Lama Kelsang Gyatso, discovered in Lithang as predicted by the Sixth Dalai Lama Tsanyang Gyatso. How grievously had Lhazang wronged the Sixth Dalai Lama and miscalculated his move of deposing the former and appointing his own choice of a Dalai Lama became clear as the Dzungars went about with their propaganda which, more than any other military moves, achieved its desired end as the majority of the Tibetan troops succumbed to it and caused serious problems for Lhazang Khan, who had only Pholanay, the higher officials of the U's Tsang troops, the Mongol Tasita and a handful of soldiers from southern Tibet, loyal to him.

During one of the encounters, Lhazang's troops, led by Pholanay and Bhumthangpa charged a desperate assult on the Dzungar camp. Though they suffered heavy losses, they were able to press the Dzungar into a near retreat. Pholanay Sonam Topgyal sent word to Lhazang that a charge led by the Khan himself would be able to rout the enemy at that instant. Lhazang tried to mobilise his household troops but was unfortunately held back by his uncle and second son Surja. Pholanay and his men, without any reinforcement were driven back by the Dzungars. From then on, the break between the Tibetans and Qosots in Lhazang Khan's camp was complete. However, Pholanay still led his troops bravely into battle until he was injured in the leg.

Meanwhile, dismayed by the devastation of war, Panchen

Lama attempted to mediate an armistice. By the order of the Panchen, Khri Rinpoche and other leading monks and noblemen gathered at the Qosot camp in Dam and tried to reason with both the sides to stop further shedding of Buddhist blood. But their mediation fell on deaf ears.

After holding back the Dzungars for more than two months, Lhazang realised that the resistance in Dam could not continue with his beleagured and ramshackle army. Dzungars, attacking down from the hills, drove Lhazang's troops back towards Lhasa, step by step. His officials and councillors advised Lhazang to retreat into Lhasa and request and wait for succour from the Manchu emperor. Pholanay, in grip of the situation, opposed the proposal to retreat into Lhasa which would ruin the army and make it unfit for active plain service. Pholanay suggested that prince Surja should hold Lhasa with a strong garrison while Lhazang Khan should hold the field at Dam continually harrassing the enemy. Pholanay's sound advice was rejected by the headstrong officers and an undecisive Lhazang Khan and his whole army, followed the Panchen Lama who had retreated into Lhasa a few days earlier in November, 1717.

Once back in Lhasa, the whole army was strengthened with recruits from the outlying districts of Tibet. Panchen Lama's holy presence gave moral courage to the troops and Lhazang, at last, consented to request for Manchu intervention not knowing that his letter will be delayed in transit and reach the Manchu emperor only in March 1718, three months after his death. Meanwhile, the whole army was reorganised in Lhasa under his select and trusted officers. Pholanay commanded the Tsang troops encamped on the banks of Kyichu. But the troops were not totally involved in what they were forced to do. Treason ran high and even the trusted longed to be on the Dzungar side and gave vital information to the invaders. And the loyalty of the whole Tibetan army towards the Dzungars was strongly undermined by the Dzungar propaganda, ingeniously whispered to Tibetan ears by the pro-Dzungar monks of the three monasteries who were soon to see the true colour of the Dzungars. Seeing the utter uselessness of such a feeble resistance, Pholanay suggested

that Lhazang Khan journey to Kokonor through Kham and march back on Lhasa with Manchu reinforcement. At this, Lhazang's pride rebelled and he eloquently cited the deeds of his and his ancestors as proof of his valour and coming victory over the Dzungars, and refused to take Pholanay's advice.

Yet Lhazang Khan was not the only one to be disillusioned and beset with problems. His enemy, Tsering Dhondup, the commander of the Dzungar forces was utterly disappointed to learn that the division of 300 Dzungars sent to Kubum to kidnap the Lithang child had been defeated and destroyed by the Manchus and the Lithang child Kelsang Gyatso was still in Kubum under Manchu protection. The news of this defeat and failure to procure the Dalai Lama cut at the very roots of the Dzungar expedition. Without the Dalai Lama, they lacked the pawn with which they hoped to influence and gain the approval and sentiments of the Tibetan clergy and people alike. And retreat at that juncture for the Dzungars was impossible. So spreading a false rumour that the division of 300 Dzungars to Kubum had succeeded in procuring the rightful Dalai Lama. Tsering Dhondup marched onto Lhasa for a final showdown with Qosot Lhazang Khan.

Arriving close to Lhasa, the Dzungars separated into four divisions, encamped on the four sides of the town, just out of the gun range of the Qosot troops. Tsering Dhondup encamped his division near Sera monastery. The monks of the three monasteries enthusiastically received the Dzungars and supplied them with food, arms and ammunition. Besides, a large number of young monks were recruited into the Dzungar army.

Lhasa was blockaded from the four sides by the Dzungars. To the eastern side, a division of Dzungars encamped at Drabchi. To the western side, the slopes of Kyetsel Luding were occupied by a third division while a fourth division of Dzungars moved around the city on the southern side.

Completing their military preparations, the Dzungars agreed on a definite plan of attack with their friends, mostly officers and dignatries of Lhazang Khan, who passed to them information on everything that was happening inside the city.

When all was set, after midnight on 30th November 1717, the Dzungars suddenly attacked. When the assault began, traitors inside the city started abandoning their posts and spreading panic for the benefit of their Dzungar allies. Everywhere, ladders were being let down to enable the Dzungars to climb the walls into the city. The western gate was thrown open by a friend of the Dzungars, and Lhazang's troops were on the run on most of the fronts.

Pholanay, on the southern front, was doubtful about his men. He had hushed up the secret correspondence between the Dzungars and his close friend Tashi Tsepa by putting to death the man who carried the letters. Under such circumstances, he left the majority of his men behind and sailed forth against his enemies with a few trusted men. By a sudden and surprising counter-attack, he succeeded in driving away the confused Dzungars. But on every front, except his, there was utter chaos and Lhazang Khan, despite his brave words of coming victory, had taken refuge in the Potala palace.

The fight raged during the whole night and countless Tibetan and Qosot Mongols were massacred. At dawn the Dzungars had won the battle and the city of Lhasa was at their mercy. Tsering Dhondup was triumphantly carried to Khromzing Khang palace. As soon as he was enthroned, he permitted his troops to sack the town forgetting the lofty ideals with which the council of Tsewang Rabten in Dzungaria first made the secret decree to rescue the Tibetans from the tyrannical rule of Lhazang Khan. The most vandalistic and savage scenes of loot, rape, massacre and arson followed which paled in comparison Lhazang Khan's tyranny. According to Ippolito Desideri, an eyewitness: "They (Dzungars) with arms in their hands rushed into the houses....robbing the treasures which had been deposited and hidden in the temples. Not satisfied they returned again and again to the houses, sparing neither age nor sex, wounding and savagely beating some, tying arms of others behind their backs and suspending them to beams and scouring them to make them reveal where their riches were concealed." The Dzungars came as conquerors who had a political mission to fulfill. But once Lhasa was at their mercy, they turned into brigands,

killing and looting without any sense of shame and dignity.

Just a day after the fall of Lhasa to Dzungar vandalism, the Panchen Lama tried to mediate with the invaders to save the fate of Lhazang and his family. But the Dzungars demanded an unconditional surrender. Lhazang Khan, shut up in the Potala knew what the Dzungars were really after. To save his family, Lhazang Khan decided to come out of Potala and face and fight his enemies as long as he could, while the rest of his family escaped into safety. Pursuing this gallant but desperate plan, Lhazang Khan with a handful of trusted Qosots rode away towards Klubug district with an army of Dzungars hotly pursuing him. Reaching a deep pitch, Lhazang's horse fell down with its rider, and the Dzungars ferociously began to attack the small band of fugitives. Lhazang was courageously defended by his officers until they were cut down. The Dzungars then rushed on the exhausted and worn out Lhazang Khan, without recognising him. In a glorious last stand, Lhazang defended himself valiantly by killing several of his enemies and wounding a few others. With one last stroke of his sword, Lhazang cut off the right arm of the nearest Dzungar, and then fell dead.

After several unsuccessful attempts to reach Lhazang, in the Potala, Pholanay decided to get help from Dayan Qungtaiji, the Qosot chief of Kokonor against the Dzungars. Hoping Lhazang will be able to hold out for a while inside the Potala, Pholanay bought a good horse and two mules at Drepung to march towards Kokonor and serve as a guide to Dayan Qungtaiji. But events were to overcome his plan, and very soon he heard about Lhazang Khan's last stand against the Dzungars, justifying his brave words to some extent.

Lhazang Khan's widow, her son Tseten and prince Surja after escaping from the Potala place sought refuge with Tagtsepa, a Tibetan nobleman of Lhasa. But Tagtsepa very treacherously betrayed them to the Dzungars hoping for an handsome reward. The fugitives were sent to Dzungaria in Ili valley where they met Gaden Tenzing whose obstinate marriage to Tsewang Rabten's daughter despite Lhazang Khan's opposition led to the fateful event just described. He was later executed in 1721 and his wife was given away to another

Mongol chief. Prince Surja's wife was the only one from Lhazang Khan's family who escaped from the Dzungars. By following a different route, she reached the Manchu outposts at Tsaidam and gave a detailed report of the events in Tibet. After the fall of Lhazang Khan in 1717, Qosot Mongol rule in Tibtt was broken forever.

Having conquered Lhasa and parts of Central Tibet with the willing co-operation of the monks of the three monasteries and a major section of the aristocracy, Tsering Dhondup was faced with the problem of organising his occupation. His army of Dzungar origin was small and were exhausted by the hard march and terrible fighting and massacre. Moreover, Tsering Dhondup did not possess outstanding leadership qualities. He was a mere military commander, whose job, as he proved during his stay in Tibet, was to force obedience and submission by terror and massacre. If the Dzungar invasion of Tibet is considered a success, it was mainly due to the skilled diplomacy and superb military organisation of Tsewang Rabten, the Dzungar ruler of Ili valley. And before he advanced from Dam to attack Lhasa, Tsering Dhondup had known that the failure of three hundred men expedition to Kubum to fetch the rightful Dalai Lama had jeopardised the ultimate success of the invasion.

Lhazang Khan's government had collapsed. His ministers were either dead or in hiding. Except for Lhasa and parts of central Tibet, the Dzungars exercised no authority over the rest of the Tibet including Western Tibet, Kham and Amdo. It would have been possible to form a government with the co-operation of the high lamas but as soon as they learnt that the rightful Dalai Lama was still in Kubum, the high lamas began to dissociate themselves from the Dzungars. The Panchen Lama was the first to do so by starting his return journey to Tashi Lhunpo in Shigatse in early 1718, just after the fall of Lhasa, clearly showing his wish to have nothing to do with the new rulers. Being self-acclaimed Gelugpas, the Dzungars could not retain the Panchen Lama by force and lost their only legal support, which could have earned them Tibetan tolerance and approval. Even the vacillating aristocracy were appalled by the Dzungar sack of Lhasa and

massacre of its inhabitants that very soon the Dzungars had nothing but superior force and terror tactics to subdue the people.

As a last resort, Tsering Dhondup formed a Tibetan puppet government at the centre, headed by none other than Lhagyal Rabten of Tagtse, the man who betrayed Lhazang Khan's family to the Dzungars. Lhazang Khan's Dalai Lama was deposed and the Lithang child Kelsang Gyatso, then residing in Kubum under Manchu security, was declared the Seventh Dalai Lama and lawful head of the Tibetan government. After reorganising the administration, Tsering Dhondup started the occupation of those provinces which remained semi-independent of Lhasa. A summon, instructing all provinces to pay homage to himself, was sent out. Dzungar raids cowed down most parts of central Tibet and religious persecution on sectarian ground raised its ugly head once again and went ahead in an unprecedented scale.

Inspired by a Dzungar lama named Losang Phuntsok of Gomang monastery in Lhasa, a clear-cut programme to persecute and if possible to root out Nyingma, Kagyud, Bon and Jonang lamas and sack their monasteries and hermitage was chalked out. All the statues, texts and images of Guru Rinpoche which they could find were burnt. Nyingma monasteries of Namgyal Ling and Mindrol Ling were stormed and sacked. Samding, the main monastery of Dorje Phagmo at Yamdrok was pillaged. Dorje Drak monastery, one of the main Nyingma centre was put to the sword. The Bonpo monastery of Rigyal Tenda was looted. The abbot of Gungthang monastery was deposed and many other monasteries were destroyed and monks dispersed. Nyingma and Bonpo monks in particular were made to stick out their tongues when meeting a Dzungar official to show that they did not practise their secret mantras as those who practised were said to have black tongues. In a righteous spirit of reformation, the Dzungars established standard of discipline for the Gelugpa monks by denouncing and driving away those monks whose learning and virtue seemed questionable to them. Behaving more like a raiding horde, they pillaged the countryside for food and fuel and denuded the Lhasa district. When the Manchus

came shortly after them, they dug up even the roots of the trees for fuel in Lhasa winter.

If by persecuting the Nyingmapas, Bonpo, Jonang etc. and destroying their monasteries, the Dzungars hoped to please the leading Gelugpa lamas of the three monasteries, for once, they were sadly mistaken. Unfortunately for the Dzungars, their brutal and savage treatment of the Nyingmapa and other sects disgusted and grieved the Gelugpa lamas of the three monasteries who regretted their misguided and miscalculated support of the Dzungars who brought such unheard of misery to so many in the holy city of Lhasa. They were also angry with the Dzungars for deceiving them with the false hope of restoring the rightful Dalai Lama. Except for Lhagyal Rabten Tagtsepa, the puppet king, no Tibetan lama or nobleman supported the Dzungar religious persecution of the selected sects and their harrassment of the people.

Throughout 1718, the Dzungars continued to terrorise the whole of Lhasa and central Tibet with their scandalising atrocities. Wherever they could find, they put to death old retainers and friends of Lhazang Khan. Pholanay, the courageous Tibetan commander of Lhazang Khan, narrowly escaped the Dzungar wrath with the intervention of the puppet regent Tagtsepa, a long time friend of Pholanay. Tashi Tsepa and other Tibetan nobles slowly rallied around the puppet government formed by the Dzungar Tsering Dhondup.

Active Tibetan resistance against the Dzungars were gradually shaping. Kanchenay, the governer of Ngari Khorsum and Pholanay of Tsang, whose valour and skill as a commander were beyond doubt, formed the nucleus of Tibetan uprising against the Dzungars whose invasion and occupation of Tibet had been a nightmare for the common Tibetans.

Hearing of the fall of Lhasa and Lhazang Khan's death, the Manchu emperor K'ang Hsi decided on war with the Dzungars as it offered an opportunity to weaken the Dzungar military might which perpetually threatened his empire and at the same time gain an active and commanding hand in Tibetan politcs. An imperial army of several thousand under a Manchu officer Erenti was defeated by the Dzungars at Nagchuka. A second force, under the emperor's 14th son

Yuntai, escorted the rightful Dalai Lama and advanced towards Lhasa. When Kanchenay and Pholanay heard the news about the advancing imperial army escorting the rightful Dalai Lama, they gathertd their forces and marched on the Dzungars in Lhasa. As well organised troops marched on the Dzungars from south and north-east of Lhasa, the remaining Dzungars fled from the city taking with them as many loot as possible. In October 1720, escorted by Mongol chiefs, Manchu officials, Tibetan lamas and noblemen, the Lithang child Kelsang Gyatso, the rightful Seventh Dalai Lama, entered Lhasa with pomp and ceremony, to redeem a beleagured city that stood as a mute witness to so many such sufferings.

4

Miwang Pholanay: The Phoenix (1689—1747)

In the history of a nation beset with the miraclous deeds of divine incarnations and mundane machinations of monastic rivalries, the rise of Pholanay Sonam Topgyal, an ordinary lay Tibetan from the Tsang aristocracy to the highest political office of virtually being the king of Tibet from 1735 to 1747 comes as a breath of fresh air.

Born and brought up in a painful century of incessant regional and sectarian fighting and chaos on the one hand and Manchu and Mongolian power struggle over Tibet on the other, Pholanay remained basically a man of peace and justice. When finally the whole of Tibetan administration fell into his hands, he gave the country a peace that it had seldom known. Fundamentally secular in his outlook, Pholanay had the extraordinary skill of maintaining such a subtle and sensible relationship with the Tibetan clergy — the only organised political party in Tibetan history — that they seldom found the courage to complain or the wit to interfere with his rule. Never was he a patriot who longed for a purely independent Tibet nor a traitor who shamelessly traded the dignity of his nation with the lure of alien political support. That he was devoted to the Manchu emperor was partly political and more a trait of his character which never allowed him to forget his friends or forgive his enemies. Brought to the limelight of Lhasa politics by the Qosot chief Lhazang Khan, he remained extremely loyal to this Khan till the very last.

But like most great men of history who attain to positions of power and controversy, he was more or less alone in his political struggle to secure a stronghold in the centre of

Lhasa aristocracy. He relied on his own instincts and the very select clique of his personal attendants which included his distant relative and trusted minister Dokhar Shabdrung Tsering Wangyal, a gifted writer and poet who immortalised the life and times of Pholonay in his *Miwang Togjod,* a biography of this great Tibetan. But in his unabated love for political power and position, Pholanay overlooked and bypassed the person of the Seventh Dalai Lama Kelsang Gyatso during whose exile for six years, Pholanay's rule over Tibet began. In our time of nationalistic historical evaluation and analysis, many would grudge a wholehearted appreciation of Pholanay, for his seemingly unpatriotic role in Tibetan affairs and more seriously for his attitude towards the Dalai Lama, prompted mainly by the political maneouvres of the Dalai Lama's father. Yet Pholanay remains one of the most remarkable figures of Tibetan history. He ignored the person and institution of the Dalai Lama out of political necessity. But he also challenged, at great personal and political risk, the decree of the Manchu emperor when the latter called for the complete suppression of the Nyingma monasteries and monks in Tibet. When no one in the Tibetan administration dared to raise their voice against this unjust imperial decree, it was Miwang Pholanay who spoke against the suppression of the Nyingmapas with such scholarship, sympathy and acumen that the imperial decree was withdrawn and Tibet saved from a further chapter of ignoble sectarian suppression.

In modern Tibetan perspectives, Pholanay's failings are his cold indifference towards the Dalai Lama and his collaboration with the Manchu emperor which is now interpreted as the beginning of the Chinese overlordship in Tibet. And judged from a very narrow nationalistic point of view, Pholanay would seem to be a traitor who was the direct cause of the execution of the anti-Manchu ministers like Ngabo, Lumpanay and Byaraba whose extermination by the Manchu gave birth to Pholanay's political power. Even with such strict hindsight judgements, Pholanay does not fail to impress posterity with his achievements, both in the administrative and cultural fields.

This Sonam Topgyal, later known to history as Miwang Pholanay, first appears in Tibetan history as a young commander in the army of Lhazang Khan, valiantly defending his master and Lhasa against the Dzungar Mongols in 1717. Courageous in battles, skilled in organising resistance and cunning in politics, Pholanay had attracted the attention of Lhazang Khan during the latter's raid on Bhutan in 1714. Though Lhazang could not sack Bhutan due to weak preparations and lack of a serious attempt at conquest, Pholanay showed extraordinary talent and valour in leading the right wing of the Qosot army. In a surprise counter attack which scattered and fled the Bhutanese army, Pholanay saved the rear guard of the left wing led by Bhumthangpa, another notable Tibetan commander of that period. The Bhutanese raid of Lhazang Khan was not a success but Pholanay, due to his skill and courage, found a secure and trusted place in the heart of the Qosot chief who was then the "king" of Tibet.

In the beginning of 1717, situation in Tibet was uneasy. Lhazang Khan's hold over the country and administration was insecure. He was opposed both by the monastic powers and the Lhasa aristocracy. Most of all, the common Tibetans did not accept the fake Dalai Lama he had forced upon them, after the deposition of the Sixth Dalai Lama and assassination of Desi Sangay Gyatso. It was, in short, a propitious and tempting time for turmoil and intrigue. The sudden and fatal Dzungar invasion of 1717 which took Lhazang totally by shock and surprise was somehow the expected epilogue of his reign.

When the battle broke out, Pholanay came to the fore of organising defence, recruiting Tibetan soldiers and above all fighting in the field at great personal risk and strain to defend his master Lhazang Khan against the Dzungars. Many times, Pholanay offered excellent military and tactical suggestions based on an objective study of the battle situation to Lhazang Khan, which if followed, would have turned the tide of the event. But unfortunately, the Khan being an old and indecisive man, could not avail of Pholanay's suggestions and left the fateful events to take over. When

the last defence of Lhasa, weak and unwilling, had collapsed, massacre was let loose by the Dzungar commander Tsering Dhondup. Lhazang Khan himself had sought refuge in the Potala with his family. And Pholanay, injured in the leg and a marked man in the eyes of the Dzungars, was still determined to join his master, if possible.

Disguising as a poor man, Pholanay journeyed towards the Potala. On his way, he saw some five hundred terrorised Tibetans being led away by a few lance carrying Dzungars. He was overcome with anger and shame at the sight and snatched a lance to attack the Dzungars. Fortunately for Pholanay he was saved from this suicidal step by his two old friends Bonrig Ngawang Dechen and Tashi Tsepa who requested him to think of his own safety rather than Lhazang Khan's for whom he had already done so much. Giving way to the opinion of his friends, Pholanay went with them as it was impossible to reach the Potala through all the confusion and misery of a sacked and looted city. Reaching Drepung, Pholanay bought a good horse to hasten away to the Qosot chief in Kokonor to ask him for his help in rescuing Lhazang Khan and family from the Potala. But before Pholanay could set out on the journey, he heard of Lhazang Khan's death at the hands of the Dzungars.

In the puppet government established by the Dzungars, Lhagyal Rabten of Tagtse played a prominent role as he was rewarded with the nominal head of the administration for betraying the Qosot royal family. The new regent was issuing summons to the abbots and ministers of Lhazang Khan's government. Under this, Pholanay along with a Mongol was sent to summon the Mindrol Ling incarnate. Knowing that the high incarnate will be imprisoned in Lhasa, Pholanay bribed his Mongol companion and allowed the lama to return to his monastery. Though Pholanay reported that the lama could not come to Lhasa due to his old age, Tsering Dhondup, the Dzungar commander violently blamed Pholanay for his failure.

Soon after this, Pholanay learnt that all the old supporters of Lhazang Khan were to be captured and imprisoned. A Gomang Lama offered Pholanay the safe sanctuary of

the monastery if he would agree to become a monk. He refused this offer. When a Dzungar messenger came to fetch him to Lhasa, Pholanay went with him without any hesitation. Near Lhasa, he was arrested undressed, bound and marched along. When his wounded leg made it difficult for him to walk, he was dressed in filthy rags and handed oer to the Dzungar officer. He was questioned regarding his estate and property for days together. He was enticed with bribery, tortured and once even taken to the bank of the Kyichu river and threatened with drowning. But his answer remained the same: whatever property he had in Lhasa had been looted by the Dzungars and whatever estate there were in Tsang were not known to him as he had always stayed in Lhasa with Lhazang Khan. Failing to gain any information out of him, Pholanay was thrown into jail where he met many other Tibetans and Mongols, including the Mindroling incarnate whom he had saved earlier. Pholanay would have perished in the prison itself of starvation had it not been for his numerous well-placed friends who sent him food and clothing and looked after his welfare. Tagtsepa, the regent himself threatened to resign from the Dzungar puppet government, if Pholanay was kept in prison any longer. And soon Pholanay was released

Both the people and the monks rejoiced in the release of Pholanay. He recovered his money and wealth which he had hidden in various places in Lhasa and handsomely rewarded Tagtsepa for his kind intervention. Though he was offered the post of minister, Pholanay did not accept it. Determined to oppose and end the Dzungar rule over Tibet, Pholanay did not want to associate with them. Most of his family estates and retainers in Tsang were given back to him except those granted to him by Lhazang Khan. The castle of Rinchentse which the regent Tagtsepa had himself occupied was very dear to Pholanay. To acquire it back, he donated it to Panchen Rinpoche having come to a secret understanding with the treasurer of Tashi Lhunpo that the castle will be later returned to him at a nominal price. Having more or less settled his accounts in Lhasa, Pholanay met several faithful soldiers of Lhazang Khan in secret and

presented them with rich gifts before retiring to his homeland in Nyang. At his estate Phola, which was brimming with wealth, Pholanay was greeted amidst great rejoicing on his return. With the wealth of his estate, he offered rich presents to local monasteries, thus gaining the support and friendship of the clergy. The whole of 1718 was spent in this way as there was nothing that he could do given the superior power of the Dzungars. At this time, some Qosot officers of Lhazang were arrested and sent away to Ili valley by the Dzungars. At a place called Nagtsang, they freed themselves and escaped to Pholanay's castle where they were warmly received. Some Dzungars visiting Tashi Lhunpo got wind of the incident and at once marched on Phola. The Qosot officials escaped to the mountains and the Dzungars could not find them anywhere.

Pholanay also made a secret journey to Drepung to meet a Dzungar prince and soon afterwards to Tashi Lhunpo where he made rich offerings of cash and estate to the monasteries and organised feasts and games for the neighbouring nobility before returning to his home estate. In these offerings to the monasteries and feasts for the nobility, Pholanay was gradually preparing the popular base of the political support which he needed in his prolonged struggle for supremacy which lay ahead. In July 1718, Pholanay heard that a Manchu army had arrived at Nagchu and his first impulse was to join it. But his wife advised against it and he once again went to Tashi Lhunpo to seek advice. At this time a retinue of Dzungar officers brought him a rescript. Thinking danger was ahead, Pholanay secretly asked his family to hide in the mountain before he received the Dzungar envoy. But it was nothing dangerous as the Dzungars had brought only compliments.

Nevertheless, this lull was merely a deception. Lhazang Khan's allies were being attacked suddenly and put to death. A close friend informed Pholanay that the Dzungars were after him. With a company of about twenty trusted men, he went into hiding in a ravine near his home estate. The Dzungars went and ravaged several castles belonging to Pholanay. Angered by the strange behaviour of the Dzun-

gars, Pholanay set out to Lhasa to get an explanation of the whole affair when he met Tagtsepa and a Dzungar commander on their way to Tashi Lhunpo. From the Dzungar, he learnt of the defeat and destruction of the Manchu force under Erentei at Nagchu. Pholanay was greatly distressed by this news but he saw that there was nothing he could accomplish under the circumstances. He attached himself to the retinue of the regent and accepted an office under the puppet government. Though the regent and the Dzungar commander paid their respect to the Panchen Lama and invited him to Ili valley, the assassination of former officials continued and two of Panchen Rinpoche's nephews were also killed. Pholanay had already decided on rebellion and planned to move out of Dzungar reach. He accompanied Tagtsepa and the Dzungar retinue upto Shigatse and on the excuse of poor health applied for an appointment as an official near the border of Nepal. This was readily granted and after necessary preparation, he went to pay respects to Panchen Rinpoche along with the three Bhumthangpa brothers the youngest of whom was his old friend Bonrig Ngawang Dechen, before departing for his home estate.

Until reaching the safe post of the border region, Pholanay had behaved as a loyal official of the Dzungar puppet government. But once outside the reach of the occupation forces, his outlook changed from subservience to plans of open rebellion. The reception of the local people was so cordial and support so ready that Pholanay worked a definite plan of uprising against the Dzungars. In this, the sudden death of his uncle Dadul whom he always respected was a contributing cause. His uncle was always a restraining influence on him and the demise of his uncle left him rather impatient and quite independent for preparing an uprising.

In order to materialise his plan of an uprising, Pholanay sent a message to Kanchenay Sonam Gyalpo, better known as Dajin Batur, the governer of Ngari Khorsum (western Tibet), proposing an open revolt against the Dzungar rule. Kanchenay, a major figure of great importance and interest of the 18th century Tibetan political scene, belonged to the

Gabshi family and was a son-in-law of Lhazang Khan who appointed him the governer of Ngari Khorsum in 1716. Though Lhazang was killed in 1717, Kanchenay still held the post of governer without any reference to the Dzungar puppet government in Lhasa. In 1719, he intercepted a Dzungar retinue who were taking a number of old officers and supporters of Lhazang Khan to Dzungaria. With these two strong willed and courageous Tibetans, a noteworthy centre of resistance was soon built up in western and south-western Tibet. Whether the Manchus had any hand in the preparation of the Tibetan uprising is not clearly known but in May 1719, five messengers of the Manchu commander prince Yuntai arrived at Tashi Lhunpo and were received by the Panchen Rinpoche.

By 1720, the preparation for the uprising was complete. Pholanay secretly wrote to the regent Tagtsepa who earlier saved his life from Dzungar imprisonment that he should escape from Lhasa and hide as a large Manchu army was approaching Lhasa with the rightful Dalai Lama and will certainly defeat the Dzungars and threaten the life of those that collaborated with them. But by then the whole country was in such a confusion of frenzied military preparations that the messenger failed to reach Lhasa to hand over the letter in time to Tagtsepa.

Kanchenay and his Ngari troops had crossed Maryumla, occupied Latod and advanced upto Groshod not heeding the Panchen Rinpoche's appeal to avoid a destructive war in the country. Against the governer of Gyantse advanced a division of Ngari force under Ngawang Yonten. Before any actual fighting began, Pholanay arrived at the scene and made a moving speech enumerating the terror and atrocities of the Dzungars and requested the leaders to unite with the advancing Manchu forces to oust the Dzungars from Tibet. Moved by the reasons of Pholanay's impassioned speech, all the Tibetans leaders assented to Pholanay and amidst great rejoicing pledged their faith in him.

At this time, Pholanay also heard that some Dzungar force was marching against Ngari. Thinking they might arrest Panchen Rinpoche, Pholanay at once set out with mixed

troops of Tibetans from Tsang, Ngari and Qosot Mongols. But the Dzungars were on their way to Dzungaria as confirmed by a deserter from the army. Changing his route Pholanay journeyed to Sangang in the valley of Raga Tsangpo and reached it in eight days. Here, he met Kanchenay and exchanged gifts amidst acclamations by both the troops. Very soon, they received a commandment from the Manchu commander inviting them to Lhasa. Though Pholanay expressed caution against immediate acceptance doubting whether it will be wiser to report to the Manchu court before submitting to the summons from Lhasa. But most of Kanchenay's officers were too eager to be present at Lhasa to witness that the right are rewarded and the guilty punished. During the last stage of the journey, the two Tibetan leaders were joined by the Panchen Rinpoche who had also been invited to Lhasa by the Manchus.

When Pholanay reached Lhasa with Kanchenay and the troops, Dzungar rule had been replaced by the Manchu. Tsering Dhondup, the Dzungar commander who invaded Lhasa in 1717, was totally defeated by General Yangsing and prince Yuntai, the 14th son of the emperor K'ang Hsi. Tsering Dhondup who was responsible for the total anarchy and massacre of Lhasa during the invasion, had fled from Dam with his remaining troops and reached Dzungaria in 1721. Of the 6000 Dzungar army who had marched to Tibet in 1717 under Tsering Dhondup, only 500 survived the Manchu onslaught of 1720. By October of the same year, the Seventh Dalai Lama for whom the Tibetans had longed so much entered the Potala to the joy of monks and lay people alike. He was accompanied by his politically ambitious father. Soon after entering Lhasa, the Manchu had enthroned the Seventh Dalai Lama and invited the Panchen Rinpoche to the ceremony. As a first step towards full control of Tibet, the new invaders formed a provisional military government and started to root out all those who collaborated with the Dzungars. Foremost among the collaborator was Tagtsepa, friend of Pholanay who betrayed the Qosot royal family and served as a puppet regent under the Dzungars. Pholanay strongly appealed for the release and

safety of Tagtsepa. But the ex-regent was imprisoned. Moreover, a definite charge of betraying the Qosot royal family to the Dzungars was brought against him and there was little that Pholanay could do except providing him with needed provisions and clothes as repayment for the help and kindness Pholanay received from Tagtsepa during the dark days of his Dzungar imprisonment. Soon after, Tagtsepa and two other ministers who collaborated with the Dzungars were beheaded on the banks of the Kyichu river in full view of the public and soldiers.

Pholanay did not receive any post as such in the new protectorate government established in Lhasa by the Manchus. But Kanchenay who was appointed the foremost Kalon(minister), in the Kashag alongwith Ngabo Dorje Gyalpo and Lumpanay Tashi Gyalpo, kept Pholanay as his chief adjutent and entrusted him with the Tsang administration. Both the father of the Dalai Lama and pholanay, though officially not members of the Kashag, were neverthless sources of strong influence on it so that, before long, the Kashag became sharply divided in their views and approach towards the administration of Tibet. Not only was the Kashag divided in their politics, but more seriously so on sectarian lines which in Tibetan history has always been the source of major political catastrophe. Kanchenay Sonam Topgyal was a staunch Gelugpa who harboured total hatred for the Nyingmapas as later events will show. Ngabo, Byaraba and Lumpanay were staunch Nyingmapas who had no love for Gelugpa supremacy. According to Sumpa Khenpo, the author of *Annals of Kokonor* he had actually heard one of the ministers, Lumpanay, say often that ". . . . if these three great evil monasteries, especially the Gomang and Gyundmed Dratsang did not exist happiness would come to Tibet." Pholanay was the most mysterious. He appeared to be a Gelugpa and patronised Gelugpa monasteries. But because of his childhood association and education at the Nyingma monastery Mindroling, he had a deep and lasting sympathy and support for Nyingma sect.

Moreover, both Kanchenay and Pholanay were devoted officials of Lhazang Khan, active opponents of the Dzungars

and strong supporters of the Manchus. They represented the western and southern provinces of Tibet, the centre of anti-Dzungar revolt. Opposed to them were Ngabo, Lumpa and Byara. Ngabo was from Kongpo and Lumpa from Lower Tsangpo valley. They represented the old style aristocracy of central Tibet and had taken no high position under Lhazang Khan, neither opposed Dzungars nor supported the Manchu rulers wholeheartedly. Byara was a monk. The mind behind him in the Kashag was the father of the Dalai Lama whose ambition and restless political dealings was to cost the Dalai Lama six long year of informal exile from Lhasa. An additional fact which worked towards the disunity of the Kashag was that each minister was the governer of a province and were mostly absent from Lhasa. In time, the Kashag became an arena of politicking for strong regional and sectarian rulers rather than a cohesive administrative body that can give peace to the nation.

One of the first problems that tested the new government and its divided Kashag was the issue of the Nyingmapa sect who had suffered greatly under the Dzungars. About 550 of their best monasteries had been destroyed and many more of the monks killed. Being a Nyingmapa in his heart, Pholanay strongly urged the new government to repair and reimburse the destruction and loss which the sect suffered under the Dzungars. But in this, he was opposed by all, especially by the Kokonor Mongol prince Tsewang Norbu. It was strange that the three Tibetan ministers, Ngabo, Byara and Lumpanay, though they were staunch Nyingmapas, did not add their voice in support of Pholanay. All the same, Pholanay did succeed in letting the Nyingmapas rebuilt their monasteries by their own efforts, without any official or sectarian hinderance or interference. Given the very sectarian overtones of the time, the concessions Pholanay acquired for the Nyingmapas was great in itself.

In about 1722, Pholanay met Dokhar Shabdrung Tsering Wangyal, his trusted friend and biographer henceforth. At the request of Gung Tsewang Norbu, Pholanay took survey of the route in Western Tibet by which the Dzungars had come in 1717. He made a very minute and successful

survey of the route during which he met no danger. Before long Pholanay was back in his home estate. Here he heard that Kanchenay returning from Ngari wanted to visit Pholanay's home area. As a significant step towards a show of greater solidarity, Pholanay summoned to Lunnag Shelkar, all the high officials of Tsang. In a great gathering of the local aristocracy, Kanchenay was warmly received. Discussion on subjects of common interest was held for many days. Heavy taxation and corvee as the cause of the misery of the people was raised and it was pointed out that the ministers Ngabo and Lumpanay were arbitrarily taxing the people of Tsang. Kanchenay and Pholanay were requested to visit Lhasa to ease the taxation. They reached Lhasa in the winter of the same year. As expected, Pholanay felt growing animosity towards him in the capital. There was tension created by their opponents when both Kanchenay and Pholanay were not allowed residence fitting their ranks on the excuse that the best residences have been occupied by the Manchus. As growing disenchantment with increasing arbitrary taxation was intense in Lhasa too, Pholanay personally took up the supervision of the accounts department. He raised it to a greater degree of efficiency and defined the power of the tax collectors on more humane basis. While Pholanay was busy in improving the taxation system, the sudden news of the death of the great and skilled emperor K'ang Hsi on December 20th, 1722, reached Lhasa. This news was to open a new chapter of dissension, civil war and chaos in Tibetan history.

The new Manchu emperor, Yangcheng, the 4th son of the late K'ang Hsi emperor lacked the intelligence and skill which enabled his father to create a concrete Manchu control over Tibet. The new emperor's mission to Lhasa brought with it the imperial instruction for Kanchenay to attend to Ngari and guard the routes of Ngari, Nagtsang and Saga from where the Dzungars might invade Tibet again. Pholanay accompanied Kanchenay to Ngari and on their way from Tashi Lhunpo reached Narthang. Here Pholanay took time to repair the monastery and its woodblock printing establishment which was to lend him lasting fame in

the cultural history of Tibet. No sooner had Kanchenay reached Ngari, a new order from the emperor for evacuation of Manchu troops from Tibet reached Lhasa. The order was so sudden and abrupt, not only in its intended withdrawl of the Manchu troops but also in its obvious inexperience with the Tibetan affairs that the future of the Tibetan administration looked more troublesome and unpredictable than ever before. None was more shocked and distressed by the order than Kanchenay whose support in the Kashag depended solely on the Manchu representatives. Pholanay held no official position in the government though he was a great influence in the decision making process. No sooner was the imperial order proclaimed in Lhasa, the Manchu commanders Tsewang Norbu and Aboo prepared for the evacuation of their troops from Lhasa though Kanchenay requested from Ngari that one of the Manchu commanders stay back in Lhasa with his troops till a reply arrived from the emperor regarding the necessity of Manchu troops in Lhasa. Shortly after the order of withdrawl, in April 1722, the emperor appointed an Amban named Orai who reached Lhasa. After paying his compliments to the Dalai Lama, the Amban suggested that Pholanay, in recognition of his faithful service to the emperor be appointed a Kalon which was unanimously accepted by the Kashag.

While Lhasa was busy in the confusion of the evacuation plan and the joy of new appointment, trouble was brewing in Kokonor. Once confirmed that the K'ang Hsi emperor had passed away and that the new emperor was withdrawing Manchu troops from Tibet, Lobsang Dajin, a grandson of Gushri Khan and chief of the Kokonor Qosot Mongols since 1714, began intriguing among Kokonor Mongol chiefs in 1723 and broke out in open rebellion in September of the same year. Lobsang Danjin dreamed of Qosot reunification and attacked the Manchu frontiers and treated with ignominy the Manchu mission returning from Lhasa. The emperor prepared for the defence of Tibet from the Qosot and ordered 1000 men to defend Chamdo and render support to the Tibetans and other Mongolians fighting the Qosot.

In Lhasa, the Kashag at once called Kanchenay from Ngari and discussed about putting down the rebellion. Pholany, as the most skilled and courageous commander was chosen to lead the Tibetan army. Pholanay at once prepared to lead the expedition appointing Dokhar Tsering Wangyal to his position in the Finance Department. Pholanay's army encamped at Nagchu where they were hit by a sudden flood. But the army escaped serious damage due to Pholanay's clever device of shelter from flood. From Nagchu camp, Pholanay's men cleared the whole area of Qosot rebels and brought the conditions back to normal. Through means both strict and lenient, Pholanay succeeded in the defeat or surrender of the rebels. Lobsang Danjin, the Qosot chief, with a few remaining followers fled towards the country of Dzungars. As both the Tibetan and Manchus attacked fiercely the rebels were totally routed by March of 1724 and Pholanay with his associates and troops returned to Lhasa where he was highly commended for his success. A report of the success in putting down the rebels was despatched to the emperor. But the very next year, reports of the same Qosot chief Lobsang Danjin nearing Tibetan border reached Lhasa. At the request of the Manchus, Pholanay accompanied Kanchenay in the expedition which did not meet any noteworthy rebels except the rigours of hard winter which caused the return journey with numerous difficulties. By 1725, both Kanchenay and Pholanay were in Lhasa. Later facts suggested that the second expedition was raised on false alarm. Lobsang Danjin never entered Tibetan territory but was satisfied with the shelter he found in Dzungaria. Yet the uneasiness and tension in Tibet remained.

In August 1726, another mission from the emperor arrived in Lhasa. At the same time as the Manchu mission, Kanchenay's messenger to the emperor returned to Lhasa and brought with him an imperial decree that hit like a bolt on the religious harmony restored in Tibet after the Dzungar invasion. The imperial decree demanded the Dalai Lama and the Kashag to suppress all the followers of Nyingmapa doctrine except Mindroling and convert them

to Gelugpa. This was a clear attempt at interference in the Tibetan religious system. Earlier the Dzungars suppressed and destroyed Nyingma monasteries and killed Nyingma and Bonpo monks but this vandalism made no Tibetans happy and instead turned the whole Tibetan populace, irrespective of their religious sects, against the Dzungars. Now the imperial decree issued without any understanding and assessment of Tibetan religious sentiments and structure was received with silence and apprehension in Lhasa.

Though disunited in other spheres, the Kashag was unanimous in the rejection of the new decree against Nyingmapas. But none dared to openly speak against nor passionately appeal for a modification of the decree except Pholanay, whose faithful devotion to the Manchu emperor was beyond any doubt. Pholanay rose to the occasion and spoke fearlessly against it. He stated that though he had a Gelugpa heritage, he is against the persecution of Nyingmaps and pointed out that both the First Panchen Lama Chokyi Gyaltsen and Fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Losang Gyatso studied Nyingma doctrines. He further noted that Tsongkhapa, the founder of Gelugpa, accepted the secret Nyingma mantras and respected their spiritual ancestors. As such he declared, the Kashag can decree Nyingmapas were not only harmless but beneficient citizens of Tibet. Pholanay's impassioned plea had its effect. Seldom was religious tolerance defined and defended with such simplicity and clarity. The Manchu envoy was so moved that he ordered Pholanay's speech to be documented. The Kashag decided to send a messenger to the emperor to get new orders. But Kanchenay and other Tibetan ministers were afraid of Pholanay's speech and its possible consequences of disobeying the emperor. As a mysterious ending to the strange decree, the Manchu court did not persue their order on the suppression of Nyingmapas any further.

Though Pholanay succeeded in avoiding the persecution of Nyingmapas, the situation in Lhasa and especially in the Kashag was deteriorating. There was a growing rift between Kanchenay and the others led by Ngabo. The disunity in the Kashag was noticed by the Manchu envoy who,

before his departure for China, advised the ministers to unite in their common efforts to serve the Tibetan administration. Pholanay discussed the matter with all the ministers. And as a result of his efforts, the father of the Dalai Lama pointed out that the power and influence of personal rule as under ancient monarch should be instituted and proposed that Kanchenay should be consented full powers. This was grudgingly agreed to by the Kashag and received the sanctions of the Dalai Lama. But Kanchenay was sometimes a proud and haughty man, conscious of exalted position and power. The new system masterminded and created with good intentions by Pholanay did not work at all and showed signs of breaking at the seams. Either due to personal grudge or as a means to please the emperor, Kanchenay started persecuting and suppressing the Nyingmapas which Pholanay had averted only recently. This misguided policy, perhaps to please the emperor, made Kanchenay extremely unpopular and even his closest aides did not support him in this.

Pholanay was at the warm springs of Olka Tagtse when a lady of a high Nyingma family of Rigzin Terchen Chokyi Gyalpo came there. No one dared to show her respects or receive her due to the stern decrees against Nyingmapas. Neverthless, Pholanay openly received her and offered her rich gifts. That Pholanay should choose to risk so much on such a critical issue at such a time showed his deep sympathies for the Nyingmapas. Yet when the lady prophesied the downfall of Kanchenay and invited Pholanay to join her sect, Pholanay refused and reaffirmed his faith in the Gelugpa sect.

Pholanay returned to Lhasa, met all the ministers and the father of the Dalai Lama and impressed on them the need to unite in keeping up the administration at such a crucial time. But he did not succeed in uniting them. Desperate and pained by the rotting situation, he personally met the Dalai Lama and asked to be releived from his ministership. But the Dalai Lama did not agree and Pholanay had to remain in Lhasa with his thankless work. He met Kanchenay after that. Much had happened between the two old friends

to ignite full confidence in each other but Pholanay strongly urged Kanchenay that the situation demanded remedy. Yet Kanchenay's blind pride and obstinacy did not let him see the clear reasons of Pholanay. While he was in such a tiring and tense situation, the news of his wife's illness took Pholanay away to Phola in 1727. At his home estate, he offered great riches to the monasteries and made thousand of monks to read out scriptures including Nyingma texts for the recovery of his wife. At the conclusion of his religious offerings and ceremonies, Pholanay received a letter from the Nyingma tutor of the Dalai Lama advising him to keep away from Lhasa during July-August. The letter also instructed him to call his elder son Gyurmed Yeshi Tseten away from Lhasa as there was danger ahead. Bewildered by the obscure supernatural warnings, Pholanay informed his close friends in Lhasa of the letter requesting them to inform Kanchenay. As a safe-guard, he posted guards on the road to Lhasa from his home estate to avoid any surprise attack and awaited in silence and suspense the impending catastrophe that was to overtake Lhasa.

The situation in Tibet itself has been growing from bad to worse mainly because of the disunity in the Kashag. The Dalai Lama was very young and as such biased in favour of his ambitious father Sonam Dargyay. Kanchenay was proud of his power and looked down on his associate Kalons. Ngabo and Lumpanay were intensely nationalistic and opposed to Kanchenay and Pholanay, both of whom were devoted to the Manchu emperor. A plot was made in which Ngabo, Lumpanay and Byaraba and the father of the Dalai Lama decided to murder Kanchenay and establish their own government. Unsuspecting Kanchenay joined the other ministers on 5th August, 1727 in Rasa Trulnang, smiling and jesting with the others. Reading a long letter presented by an attendant Kanchenay was caught unware by the hair from the back. All the ministers present drew their daggers and swords to stab him while their supporters rushed from outside. As Kanchenay tried to drag himself to the door, he was stabbed mercilessly. Even after he was dead, the attackers continued hacking his corpse that many

injured each other in their frenzy and eagerness to knife him. Two of Kanchenay's chief attendants were killed. Others were bound and thrown into prison. His wife and daughters were murdered in cold blood the very next day. Soldiers were sent to different provinces to kill those who supported Kanchenay. A strong group was sent to Phola to kill Pholanay whose friends and associates in Lhasa were imprisoned. Only Dokhar Tsering Wangyal escaped this fate.

Phola estate, at the time of the murder of Kanchenay in Lhasa, was preparing for an annual religious ceremony. Through one of the brothers of his wife, Pholanay heard about the happenings in Lhasa. In order not to disturb his household, he kept up the preparations for the religious ceremony while on the other hand he prepared for the event by procuring swift horses from Gyantse. In the afternoon of the ceremony, he assembled his men and divulged to them the news of Kanchenay's murder and the need to prepare for war. Pholanay showed them three alternative plans: they should seek refuge at the Manchu camp in Hsining and then quit the country or call together all the soldiers of Ngari and Tsang to attack or else, as a last resort, occupy the whole of Saga, Groshod and Ngari giving up Tsang for the moment. The last alternative was chosen and Pholanay himself decided to journey to Ngari to gather an army there. At Phola estate, he gathered a strong guard to keep safe his sick wife and instructed them to defend it for one month by which time he hoped to return from Ngari.

Without losing any time, Pholanay despatched a messenger to the emperor with a detailed report of the rebellion and murder of Kanchenay in Lhasa for he well knew that if his opponents got to the emperor before him it would mean his ruin. As it happened, Pholanay's messenger reached the imperial court just a month after the murder in Lhasa. In addition to the report of the murder of Kanchenay, he gave a full report on Pholanay's attempt to organise an army to quell the rebellion and requested the emperor's military aid.

With his remarkable organising ability as manifested during the Dzungar invasion of 1717, Pholanay performed an admirable piece of political stratagem by uniting the

whole of Ngari army under his leadership. On the way to Ngari, he passed Rinchen Tse where he collected weapons and soldiers. When the Panchen Rinpoche requested him to refrain from violence, Pholanay submitted a detailed indictment of the father of Dalai Lama and the other ministers who had murdered Kanchenay and also prepared a manifesto on the deeds of Kanchenay and the need to avenge his foul murder. This was read in Tashi Lhunpo and other places. At Shelkar Dzong, he enlisted Changlochenpa and Samdrub Lingpa, the two commanders of Tsang, he also requested the governer of Saga Uching Phuntsok Delek and Kanchenay's uncle Gashi Tseten, the deputy governer of Ngari. The only noteworthy character who did not collaborate but secretly organised hostility against Pholanay was commander Numaba, a brother-in-law of Kanchenay. At Purang, Pholanay enlisted the support of its governer. Further on his way, he confiscated cattles belonging to Byaraba and a number of mules carrying silver ingots of Ngabo from Kongpo. At Saga Dzong, Pholanay was met by Uching Phuntsok Delek who swore his allegiance to Pholanay. With Saga under his control, Pholanay had fully succeeded in the first phase of his expedition. From Saga dzong, Pholanay and Saga governer wrote a joint letter to Ngari governer Gashi Tseten Tashi, the uncle of Kanchenay asking him to join them with the troops of Rudok and Gartok to avenge his murdered brother. Gashi Tseten Tashi willingly joined Pholanay. The most important support of Western Tibet was then secured. Without wasting any time, Pholanay started his return journey to Tsang. It was only a month after Kanchenay's murder and before his opponents had any time in organising the forces of U's and Kongpo, Pholanay now referred to as *Miwang* (ruler of men) — was on his way to avenge the death of Kanchenay Sonam Gyalpo, his friend and colleague of many years.

As a preliminary to winning the civil war, which raged from 1727-1728, the deeply religious Pholanay decided to propitiate the gods by repairing the Bodh Nath stupa in Nepal and decreed that the revenue of Kyung dzong Karpo, Kyirong and Saga should be set aside for the purpose. As

Pholanay continued his journey, small bands of armies joined him and support arrived from the abbot of Sakya. Another high lama circulated a prophecy in which he requested the people to refrain paying taxes to the Lhasa government unless the evil ministers were overthrown by the hero Miwang Pholanay. This prophecy did much to gain popular support for Miwang Pholanay. Meanwhile, Phola estate had been attacked for five days by Lhasa soldiers who were defeated and repulsed. But one of the commanders sent to beseige Phola took hold of Gyantse. Seeing that the Lhasa armies were retreating, the Tsang peasants organised themselves and attacked the Lhasa soldiers at Gyantse. To the distress and misery of the country and people, the civil war began and it did not show any sign of stopping even at the repeated request and intervention of the Panchen Lama who could not bear to see so much bloodshed. He requested the help of the Dalai Lama in halting the civil war but apparently the Dalai Lama was too young and totally dominated by his father, who with his other ministers Lumpanay, Ngabo and Byarapa were as determined as Pholanay to come out victorious in the struggle and form the new government.

The civil war itself was divided into three distinct periods. The first and second periods were concentrated in Tsang. In the first phase, the Lhasa troops took the initiative and attacked to gain control of the regions and estates under Miwang Pholanay. But they could not succeed against the Miwang's energetic offensive charges. But at the same time, Pholanay had expected too much out of his raw and untested troops and carelessly led them into an offensive charge which earned a disastrous defeat at Kudus. His remaining troops literally took to the hills and when Miwang tried to reorganise them, they suggested that they retire to Ngari for the year and attack the following year with reinforcement from the Mughal rulers of Delhi. Pholanay once again appealed to his troops and showed the dangers of getting Mughal help which will completely destroy Buddhism from Tibet. At their leader's fervent appeal, the troops came back to life once again.

In the second phase of Tsang campaign, it was Miwang Pholanay who took the initiative at an offence and reached as far as Shigatse. But there was no clear-cut military decision and moreover the peasantry had suffered much under the undisciplined and reckless Lhasa troops who beat monks, raped women and looted the peasants. Lumpanay, the Lhasa commander was not a great organiser, nor a commander whose one aim should have been an offensive attack on the very position of Pholanay's support in Saga and Ngari. Instead he was content with a defensive position. But he was a sound tactician and an obstinate fighter. Both sides were out for each other's total ruin and no amount of pacification and intervention by the Panchen Rinpoche and Sakya abbots were of any use.

In an effort to move out of the stalemate, and procure a clean victory, Miwang Pholanay decided to shift the threatre of war northwards and join the Mongol troops in Dam region. As the Panchen and the Sakya abbots were still trying to negotiate between the two factions, the Miwang agreed to an armistice in Tsang and after the new year of 1728 started exchanging letters with Lumapanay. The truce as originally outlined requested that both the parties should disband armies, suspend hostility till the decision of the emperor arrived and the ravaged Tsang areas must have remision of revenue. The negotiations were tiring and long. But as both the Dalai Lama and his father were all for peace and exerted their full influence, Miwang Pholanay and Lumpanay soon came to an agreement. But Lumpanay started complaining and succeeded in complicating the decisions to such an extent that the two envoys signed in April 1728 an uneasy document that was entirely different from what was originally agreed on. Even so, the populace rejoiced in the truce and the prisoners on both sides were exchanged and released.

Lhasa faithfully carried out the conditions of the truce and disbanded their large army. But Miwang Pholanay had not wished to carry out the conditions and did not disband his army. Moreover, he knew well that the emperor's decision will be in his favour. Beleiving in certain victory, cunning

Pholanay looked for an excuse to break the truce and found it in some of the Lhasa commanders and garrisons in Tsang, which Lumpanay had not called back and disbanded. Taking this to be an excuse, Pholanay widely propagated that the Lhasa government was planning a surprise attack on him and openly wrote to the Panchen Lama raising the alarm that if he respected the truce any longer, religion and the country will be in grave danger. The Panchen Rinpoche wanted to intervene personally, but epidemic of small pox which had gripped the country at the time as the civil war, prevented him from doing so.

Miwang Pholanay at once started preparing for the coming struggle by sending men to call his elder son from Shelkar and placed the strategic Tsang fortress under his various commanders. Having planned the safety of Tsang, he ordered Changlochen and his son to march to southern border of U's through Yardok. This was intended as a diverson. When he finished these arrangements, Pholanay collected his personal troops and marched on the northern road till he arrived at Yangpachen. Thus began the last phase of the civil war, the northern campaign entirely based on the dishonest diplomacy of Miwang Pholanay.

In Lhasa, Ngabo and the other ministers in Lhasa were taken completely by surprise and they sent messengers to recall their troops from Kongpo and Narkartse and encamped them in the meadow in front of Potala.

Once in the north, Miwang Pholanay quickly gathered forces with the Mongols who have been harrassed by the Lhasa troops and in addition gained the sympathy and support of leading lamas who gave him good horses and men. It was important for Pholanay to be in Lhasa when the Manchu army arrived as he wanted to be the *de facto* power. As such, Pholanay made straight to Lhasa encountering the little and sporadic resistance of the now demolished troops of Lhasa under Lumpanay. Miwang Pholanay's army was disciplined and did not cause unnecessary trouble for the people and this won them the support and sympathy of the U's peasants. By July 1728, Pholanay was in Lhasa with his large army. His entry with his troops was not accompanied

by looting and pillaging as during the Dzungar invasion of 1717. The Lhasa troops had either joined the advancing army of the Miwang or else voluntarily disbanded without staging any resistance. Except for the small army and ministers ensconced in the Potala, whole Lhasa was in Miwang Pholanay's hand who eagerly awaited the arrival of the Manchu army.

Among others, the Dalai Lama, his father, the Manchu envoys Senge and Mala were in the Potala with the rebelling ministers Ngabo, Lumpanay and Byaraba. Concerned with the safety of the Dalai Lama, the chief dignitaries of the three monasteries met the Miwang to tell him that the Dalai Lama and his father were innocent of the murder of Kanchenay and should be allowed to reside in one of the monasteries. The Manchu envoys came out of Potala and took their residence in their office. The Dalai Lama was asked for his choice of residence and met Miwang Pholanay personally at Gaden Khangsar palace. During this meeting, the Dalai Lama requested that the three ministers Ngabo, Lumpanay and Byarba be allowed to reside in town under protection till the Manchu forces arrived. This was agreed to by Miwang Pholanay against much criticism from his own troops, not knowing what the Manchu decision would be. But Pholanay assured them of Manchu support for himself. On the other hand, the ministers who had appealed to the emperor were hopeful of Manchu intervention in their favour and had also the hope that the troops of Ngabo's son from Kongpo might rescue them. But the arrival of Miwang Pholanay's son at the head of a large army destroyed their hope of rescue and when the Manchu army finally arrived bringing rewards for Pholanay's army, the ministers finally learnt how unrealistic their hope of Manchu favour had been.

The Manchu expedition led by Mailu and Jalangga formed a high court of justice with the Manchu envoys Senge and Mala. They summoned the ex-ministers Ngabo, Lumpanay and Byarba and formally indicted them with the charge of rebellion against the emperor and murder of Kanchenay. The next day, the trial began. Pholanay was seated with the

Manchus. And, the ex-ministers were in chains. Their defence consisted of a detailed indictment of Kanchenay, accusing him, among others, of not respecting the Dalai Lama, favouring the Dzungars and secret correspondence with the neighbouring kingdoms including Dzungar ruler Tsewang Rabten. Pholanay refuted each and every charge against Kanchenay and for days together, long and heated debate ensued. At last the Manchus decided in favour of Miwang Pholanay. But the ex-ministers produced a list of their supporters and enemies which caused a number of random arrests in Lhasa. Pholanay strongly pleaded against this and secured the release of most of the collaborators including Dokhar Shabdrung Tsering Wangyal who fought against him in the civil war.

On 1st November, the guilty prisoners, seventeen in all, were paraded naked and chained on the banks of Bamari canal some distance from the Potala. In a most gloomy and gruesome manner, the slow execution of the sentenced Tibetans took place. The Lama of Kyomulung and abbot of Namgyal Dratsang were strangled to death on the sccafold. Ex-ministers Lumpanay and Ngabo were slowly and painfully sliced to death by the Manchu death penalty known as "the death of a thousand cut". The rest were decapitated. The remaining members of the family of the guilty including children were not spared. Only Byaraba's family was deported into slavery. The Tibetans learnt a terrible lesson in brutal Manchu justice and was cowed down in submission. The Miwang himself was severely dejected by the gruesome spectacle and offered presents and money to the monasteries to say prayers for those executed.

After the merciless execution of the ex-ministers and clean-up of the rebels from Lhasa, the Manchus set to reorganising the Lhasa administration. As the young Dalai Lama formed the centre of intrigue with his ambitious and restless father, the Dalai Lama was invited to visit Peking for one year. At this the Miwang and other Tibetans including the Panchen Rinpoche requested the Manchus not to deprive them of the Dalai Lama. But the invitation to Peking was a mere decoy and once the Dalai Lama accepted, it was an-

nounced that he will journey to Kham for the welfare of the people.

Before the Dalai Lama left Lhasa, Pholanay had decided the form of the new government in consultation with the Manchus. He retained in-charge of Tsang and appointed two ministers Dokhar Tsering Wangyal and Thonpa Sichod Tseten for U's. As Pholanay himself had selected the ministers, they were subordinate to him and soon after they received the emperor's aproval for the new government. Through his persuasion and entreaties, Pholanay also succeeded in reducing the Manchu garrison from 10,000 to 2000 soldiers which otherwise would have proved an economic burden on Lhasa.

During the exile of the Dalai Lama from 1729-1735, Miwang Pholanay consolidated his rule and slowly recovered the country from the ravages of the civil war. He appeased the monasteries of Lhasa and visited the Panchen Rinpoche at Tashi Lhunpo, as from his long experience in Tibetan politics, he had learnt that the support of the monasteries was essential for a strong and stable government. Next he turned his attention to law and order and repressed the bands of robbers who menaced the travellers and pilgrims. He improved the postal system and raised taxation on a humane and sound basis. Freedom of trade was carried for and religious persecution was annihilated. With such a healing return to normalcy, Miwang Pholanay trained a strong but small Tibetan army with the help of the Manchus.

In the cultural and religious field, Pholanay in 1730 took up the task of engraving on the planks a new edition of the now famous Narthang Kangyur and Tengyur, the Tibetan Buddhist canons. The whole Kangyur was completed by 1732, presented to the Panchen Rinpoche for blessing and then deposited at Narthang. A few years later, the Tengyur was also completed. At the end of 1742, the Tengyur was presented to the Dalai Lama who ordered a set to be preserved in the Kunga Raba of the Khyungrabs Lhakhang.

In his foreign policy Miwang Pholanay was able to secure suzerainty over Bhutan by following a similar policy of supporting all the Bhutanese factions as the Manchus did

in Tibet. From Pholanay's time, the Bhutanese rulers regularly paid respects to Lhasa on or after every Tibetan new year. Not only in Bhutan, but the rulers of Ladakh maintained very cordial relations with the Miwang and often sent missions to Lhasa. Through the contacts in Ladakh, he succeeded in keeping a close watch on the movement of the Dzungars.

By April 1735, the exiled Dalai Lama was returning to Lhasa through eastern and central Tibet. The local dignitaries and lamas vied with each other in paying respects to such a celebrated personage. On the way to Lhasa, the Dalai Lama was met by Miwang Pholanay's second son Gyurmed Namgyal. Near Radeng the Miwang himself accompanied by all his ministers and high lamas of the three monasteries received the Dalai Lama. In September of that year, the Dalai Lama entered the Potala for the second time. But beneath the joy and glitter of the return of the Dalai Lama was a sad undertone of limited freedom and restrictions in his movement and political dealings. The father of the Dalai Lama was not allowed to say in Lhasa but in the valley of Zargu Karman, three days journey from Lhasa. The Second Panchen Lama Losang Yeshi passed away in 1737 and the very next year, his reincarnation Losang Palden Yeshi was discovered and enthroned in Tashi Lhunpo. Except for an unfortunate rift between himself and the Dalai Lama towards the end of his rule, Miwang Pholanay's eight years of kingship (1729-1747) has been one of the most peaceful, efficient and just rule that Tibet had enjoyed in a long and turbulent time. Impressed with his just and efficient administration, the emperor rewarded him with the rare distinction of *Chun-wang* or prince of the second class.

A man who made to the top in the complex and unpredictable Lhasa politics from the base of Tsang aristocracy by sheer will power, skill, courage and diplomacy, Miwang Pholanay Sonam Topgyal was essentially a realist who had no lofty patriotism. Purely due to political necessity, he became a tool of the Manchus. But to them, he was irreplaceable. At a critical juncture when Tibet was being tossed to and fro in the menacing game of the Central Asian politics

between the Manchus and Dzungars, Miwang Pholanay emerged as an able commander who steadily rose to the top in the turmoil and became the king of the land. But once at the top he realised that his rule was based on mistrust between the U's and Tsang aristocracy and survived on the gruesome Manchu repression of 1728. Above all, his rule was based as much on his personal relations and influence at the Manchu courts as on their readiness to repress any uprising that tried to take Tibet away from the Manchu.

Deeply religious and superbly correct in his dealings with Tibetan monastic powers, Pholanay was at the same time a cold and calculating man who was formally a Gelugpa but remained a Nyingmapa in his heart. But toleration and loyalty were a great merit in his personality. Till the very end, he remained loyal to Lhazang Khan and his memory. When the Dzungars tried to gain influence in Tibet in 1744 by making donations to the monks and monasteries, Pholanay vehemently protested and upset their plan of Lhazang Khan's murder from further dealings in Tibet.

Yet Pholanay was more or less alone in what he did. Except for his small band of personal retainers and the majority of the Tsang aristocracy, he had no great traditional party or vested support at his back. His internal Kashag was his making and wholly subservient to him. Though he pursued the most generous and sensible policy towards the monastic power, the Tibetan clergy did not trust or support him wholeheartedly, due mainly to his attitude towards the Dalai Lama and his strong Nyingma learnings which he did neither flaunt nor hide.

Born in 1689 to Pema Gyalpo and mother Dolma Bhuti of Taglung Mendang at Phola, Sonam Togyal known to history as Miwang Pholanay, first came to Lhasa in 1697 and was introduced to Desi Sangay Gyatso, the regent of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Returning to Tsang, Sonam Topgyal grew up in Phola in close affinity to Panchen Rinpoche of Tashi Lhunpo. Mostly educated at Mindroling, the famous Nyingma monastery, he remained attached to it throughout his life. In 1717, he married Palzang Kyid, a daughter of Kyibuk family. It was a Kokonor Mongol prince Sebtergel who came

to see the Panchen Rinpoche and took an interest in the promising youth whom he took to Lhasa and later introduced to Lhazang Khan. This was the beginning of Miwang Pholanay Sonam Topgyal's unparalleled political carrer in Tibetan history till his sudden death on March 12th, 1747 when his rift with the Dalai Lama was causing tension and unrest in the country.

5

Gung Gyurmed Namgyal: The Nationalist (1747-1750)

The sudden death of Miwang Pholanay Sonam Topgyal left the whole of Tibet apprehensive of what will follow the many years of unparalleled peace and prosperity which his reign had ushered in. Though Miwang Pholanay was a just and great administrator, his rift with the Dalai Lama had wounded many sections of the Tibetan society. Above all, the Tibetans clearly remembered the brutal Manchu suppression of 1728 on which grew the reign of Pholanay. As if to underline the uneasy atmosphere of Lhasa and its increasing apprehension of what will come next, the political stage was occupied by Gyurmed Namgyal, the second son of Miwang Pholanay. Gyurmed Namgyal was given to violent temper, the same cold indifference towards the Seventh Dalai Lama and paradoxically, a strong dislike of the Manchu presence in Tibet which was such a crucial factor for his father's successful reign.

It is ironic, but in a sense inevitable, that the grandeur of peace and stability established in Tibet after many years of constant upheaval by Miwang Pholanay in formal collaboration with the Manchu emperor should be shattered soon after his death by the patriotic but rambling plans of his son Gyurmed Namgyal whose death restored and returned the Dalai Lama to the centre of Tibetan politics as a unifying link. Inexperienced, hasty and occasionally cruel as he was, the story of Gyurmed Namgyal must be told. Unfortunately it is not one of truimph but tragedy. Tibetan history has known few rulers as violent and impatient nor as determined and nationalistic as Gyurmed Namgyal in his hazardous, if not impossible mission of ousting the Manchus from

the Tibetan soil. Where his illustrious father Miwang Pholanay survived and salvaged the political fate of Tibet by skilled collaboration with the Manchus, Gyurmed Namgyal chose to persue the opposite course, however dangerous and suicidal. His one aim was to get rid of the Manchus from Tibet. And it seemed as if every passing day made him more impatient to fulfill his mission. Yet just as his father was more or less alone in what he tried to achieve, Gyurmed Namgyal found himself more or less in the same position giving rise to increasing doubts and suspicions that verged on paranoia in him.

Gyurmed Namgyal, the younger son of Miwang Pholanay inherited from his remarkable father the reign of the Tibetan empire but not the experience and skill which his late father exercised in giving the land unprecendented peace and prosperity by tactfully reducing the Manchu suzerainty over Tibet into a mere formality. Nevertheless, Gyurmed Namgyal was a strong, courageous and often obstinate character whom his father selected as his successor in preference to the elder son Yeshi Tseten, who was a retiring and religious man, not given to the hard and cruel affairs of the state.

Young and inexperienced, Gyurmed Namgyal's reign lasted only four years. But what he aspired for in his short reign brings him out as a tragic Tibetan hero who tried on a course which his talented father never even imagined and which no one, before or after him except the great Thirteenth Dalai Lama, wholly succeeded in achieving. Proving himself to be a constant source of headache and worry for the Manchu emperor with his unpredictable actions and petitions, Gyurmed Namgyal brought out, in his rather haphazard and disorganised way, the latent Tibetan dislike of foreign domination and urge for political independence from Manchu control. Halfway in his struggle to cut down Manchu influence and interference in Tibetan politics, he was brutally murdered. And the Tibetan dream of independence as envisioned by Gyurmed Namgyal came to an abrupt end.

After concluding in the most magnificient fashion the funeral ceremony of his late father Miwang Pholanay, Gyur-

med Namgyal summoned a great assembly of leading lamas and lay officials for the smooth transfer of the political power to himself and pledged to uphold and follow the policy of his late father. His appointment was approved by the Manchu emperor who donated towards the funeral expenses of the late Miwang Pholanay and sent a condolence mission. At the same time, the emperor asked the Amban Fucing to instruct Gyurmed Namgyal to retain the old ministers of his father like Dokhar Tsering Wangyal, Thonpa Sichod Tseten and Duke Pandita in the Kashag. Not being very sure of the new Tibetan ruler, the emperor secretly instructed the Amban to keep a close watch on Gyurmed Namgyal and report on him from time to time.

An unfortunate development in the later phase of Miwang Pholanay's life was his rift with the Dalai Lama. This uneasy relationship was left as a legacy to Gyurmed Namgyal who did not initially try to restore the cordiality befitting the temporal and spiritual heads of the Tibet of that age. When the Dalai Lama volunteered personally to read scriptures and say prayers for the soul of the deceased Miwang Pholanay, Gyurmed Namgyal was reluctant to allow it. But the arrival of Sopai, a new Amban from Peking changed the situation. As a result of their joint efforts, Fucing and Sopai, the two Amban succeeded in formally mending the relations between Gyurmed Namgyal and the Dalai Lama.

In 1748, the Manchu emperor permitted a Dzungar mission in Lhasa to receive blessings from the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Rinpoche and to obtain religious concession and establish open contact. This mission was lavishly entertained by Gyurmed Namgyal. As with every Dzungar movement, the mission made the Manchus worry and suspect the Tibetan intentions even though this mission was formally allowed by the emperor himself. As if to remove suspicions, Gyurmed Namgyal complained to the emperor about the financial strain caused by the Dzungar mission on the Tibetan government and the emperor amply rewarded the Tibetan ruler and his ministers with rich gifts and silk clothes etc. Shortly after, an imperial decree to avoid

further contact with Dzungars was received in Lhasa.

Nothing dramatic happened in the first two years of Gyurmed Namgyal's rule. He paid his courtesy calls on the young Panchen Rinpoche or otherwise engaged himself in the frenetic game of hunting, hurting the religious sentiments of his conservative ministers and the big monasteries. Religious life in the capital continued as before and the young Panchen Rinpoche visited Lhasa and called on the Dalai Lama amidst great festivity and splendid reception. Both the Ambans were recalled to China. Fucing went in April 1748 and Sopai could not leave till the new Amban Labdon arrived in November.

But Gyurmed Namgyal's one wish was to end the Manchu control and interference in Tibet. Towards this aim, he had skillfully fooled the Manchu emperor into reducing the strength of the Manchu garrison in Lhasa by submitting a memorandum to call the soldiers back. The emperor, without properly recalling the consequence of his predecessor Yungchen's order of withdrawal of Manchu troops in 1723, released an imperial decree for the recall of 400 soldiers with the returning Ambans.

When his first step had succeeded without making the emperor suspicious, Gyurmed Namgyal petitioned the emperor through the Amban Labdon to gain permission for despatching Gelugpa Lamas from the three monasteries to those outlying Tibetan regions occupied by the Manchus during the time of the K'ang Hsi emperor and then mostly under Nyingma influence. Though disguised as a religious project, it was a clear attempt to gain political influence in the areas which could cause the emperor unending problems once a chain of rebellion breaks out. The emperor did not issue a formal answer but saw through what Gyurmed Namgyal was trying at. Once the emperor became suspicious he at once began to act on it. Labdon was recalled and Chishan, an old man experienced in Tibetan affairs was sent to Lhasa as the new Amban with clear instructions to report on the turn and tide of Tibetan politics.

Unfortunately for Gyurmed Namgyal, his youth and arrogance had embittered him with his elder ministers who

have been the loyal servants of the emperor from the time of his illustrious father. When the new amban Chishan arrived in Lhasa, he found that he had ready alliance against Gyurmed Namgyal in the elder ministers. Duke Pandita, whose son Gyurmed Namgyal had kept as an escort was bitter and fully against the Tibetan ruler. Influenced in his opinion of the Tibetan ruler by the adverse report of the ministers, the Amban reported to the emperor that Gyurmed Namgyal was a proud, obstinate and oppressive ruler who is liked neither by the people nor by the Dalai Lama. In the same report, the Amban Chishan suggested that Yeshi Tseten, the elder son of Miwang Pholanay be recalled from Ngari province and be given a share in the Lhasa government as a possible check against Gyurmed Namgyal. He also opined that the Dalai Lama be shifted to Gartar to keep him out of the hot bed of intrigue and strife in Lhasa itself. The emperor did not take up the suggestion of Chishan but revived the rule of dual Ambans and instructed Fucing from his post of Kansu to report at Lhasa as the second Amban. Through the Ambans, the emperor expressed his decision to overlook Gyurmed Namgyal's actions and attitudes with regards to his youth and inexperience and above all with respect to the memory of his late father Miwang Pholanay. But, the Ambans were also ordered in the event of turmoil in Lhasa to keep in touch with old warrior Yueh Chung-chi of Szechewan who had successfully put down the Chin-Chuan rebellion.

Gyurmed Namgyal must have known, through his men, of the Manchu Amban's plan to bring his elder brother from Ngari to Lhasa to eventually replace him. Only in this light would his attempt to eliminate his elder brother make some sense. In 1748 he had reluctantly given up an expedition to Ngari against his brother at the stiff opposition of his council of ministers. But now he took it up with renewed determination especially when his brother had become the alternative choice of Manchu emperor for the Lhasa administration. Trumping up a false charge against his brother Yeshi Tseten by accusing him of destroying monasteries in Ngari, plundering traders and caravan routes,

Gyurmed Namgyal informed the emperor of his troop preparations. But this time the Manchu emperor was not taken in. He ordered Yeshi Tseten to refute the charges against him and rebuked Gyurmed Namgyal for his unauthorised troop movement. The Dalai Lama, on his part, tried to mediate between the two brothers by arranging to send a high lama with a letter to Yeshi Tseten. But Gyurmed Namgyal opposed it. The emperor did not take any action and instead reminded Gyurmed Namgyal of the loyalty and the examplary reign of his late father. Seeing that Chishan was old and ineffective, the emperor re-appointed Labdon as the second Amban with Fucing and continued to hope that their arrival would set the conflicting matters right in Tibet. The Panchen Rinpoche also wrote directly to Gyurmed Namgyal to avoid a civil war between two brothers but before long the news of the death of Yeshi Tseten in Ngari on 25th January 1750 reached Lhasa.

Gyurmed Namgyal arranged a great ceremony for his deceased brother and had both the Dalai Lama and Panchen Rinpoche preside the occassion with himself as the chief mourner. But a thorn in the form of the 55th Tri Rinpoche Ngawang Namkhazen who had earlier refused to practise black magic against Yeshi Tseten at the command of Gyurmed Namgyal presented itself when the high Lama once again refused to participate in the mock funeral. An enraged Gyurmed Namgyal, with the most unwilling consent of the Dalai Lama, Panchen Rinpoche and the monks, deposed Tri Rinpoche who later died in mysterious circumstances. The fact that Yeshi Tseten did not die but was violently killed by Gyurmed Namgyal's men became clear when the latter tried to kill the murdered brother's two sons. The elder son Phuntsog Wangpo was killed. The younger Gyurmed Wangyal took refuge with the Panchen Rinpoche and became a monk at Tashi Lhunpo. Though Gyurmed Namgyal's repeated petition to the emperor to permit him to take over Ngari went unreplied, he took the law into his own hand and occupied Ngari soon after.

For the emperor the death or murder of Yeshi Tseten had simplified things and he recalled the troops that had

marched from Szechewan to deal drastic measures against Gyurmed Namgyal. At the same time, the emperor instructed Fucing and Labdon to act according to circumstances. Gyurmed Namgyal was then arranging his marriage with the daughter of a Kokonor chief and sent his minister Tsering Wangyal and others to receive the bride at Nagchu. But the bride party was held up and the ministers were recalled to Lhasa by the Dalai Lama.

Gyurmed Namgyal himself was on a tour of Ngari and Saga region recently disturbed by the crisis between the two brothers. After about two months, he toured Gyantse and later stopped at Rinchentse. It was here that he accused Dokhar Tsering Wangyal of conspiring against him and causing the rift with his elder brother Yeshi Tseten. When the ministers tried to calm him, Gyurmed Namgyal literally went berserk and hurled two spears at Dokhar Tsering Wangyal which did not get the minister but injured a horse and killed an attendant standing nearby. Perhaps, the young and hot blooded Gyurmed Namgyal was becoming paranoid and pathalogic in his lonely struggle to find a way to end the Manchu control over Tibetan affairs. Probably, the ministers including Tsering Wangyal have had a hand in a plot to replace him with the more docile and retiring Yeshi Tseten. However, tension was rising and everything indicated a violent turn ahead.

Continuing his tense and dramatic journey after this violent incident, Gyurmed Namgyal paid a visit to the Panchen Rinpoche at Tashi Lhunpo. Ever since the two Ambans arrived in Lhasa, Gung Gyurmed Namgyal had the unpleasant suscipion that the emperor planned to arrest and depose him. But his inexperience compelled him to confide in others that after the withdrawal of 400 Manchu soldiers from Lhasa, the rest can be eliminated without much difficulty. During the same journey, he had violently put down supporters and sympathisers of his elder brother who were intensely hostile to him. Probably as a move towards any danger from China, he had successfully shifted his guns and moved his troops out of Lhasa which looked as active preparation for a revolt to the watchful eyes of the Manchu

Ambans. But the emperor was under the false impression that everything was well and quiet in Tibet and even considered recalling the two Ambans to court and had already ordered Bandi, the Kokonor chief to replace Fucing.

The Ambans, eye witness to Gyurmed Namgyal's sporadic preparations for an uprising reported the facts to the Manchu court. But the emperor did not believe that Gyurmed Namgyal could be seriously planning a revolt and delayed in issuing any specific instructions. However, he had instructed the two Ambans to remain in Lhasa, keep a close watch on Gyurmed Namgyal and keep secret the journey of Bandi from Kokonor to Lhasa.

Soon after, Gyurmed Namgyal shifted a large load of gunpowder and 1500 soldiers from Kongpo to Lhasa, clearly intending to carry out his plan of wiping out the remaining Manchu force from Tibet. Strangely the emperor still chose not to heed the reports of his Amban but brought out a new theory that Gyurmed Namgyal was preparing to attack his brother Yeshi Tseten, who according to the emperor was still alive in Ngari. As Gyurmed Namgyal was then in Tsang at the head of 2000 strong army, the emperor advised his Ambans to wait for his return. Though the emperor was undecisive and hesitating in his policy towards Gyurmed Namgyal, the two Ambans in Lhasa, witness to the birth of a rebellion or even civil war if it was not nipped in the bud, decided otherwise and informed the emperor of their decision to deceive and murder Gyurmed Namgyal as the only way to avoid an uprising. The emperor, annoyed with the two Ambans' impatience in deciding such a vital matter, issued an order preaching prudence and patience to the two Ambans yet at the same time permitting them to act as circumstances demanded. Simultaneously, the emperor ordered the Szechewan officials to proceed to Lhasa for investigation. But events in Lhasa moved too fast. The imperial order was issued on November 6th, only five days before the tragic event in Lhasa took place.

Gyurmed Namgyal returned to Lhasa on 11th November 1750. On the same day, the two Ambans invited him to the Manchu residence at Khromzig Khang presumably to

attend a conference. Gyurmed Namgyal readily accepted the invitation and went to attend the conference with a few men. He was received in a room on the second floor and then invited to the Ambans's bedroom for a secret conference. Gyurmed Namgyal went in alone. As soon as the door was closed behind Gyurmed Namgyal, Amban Fucing scolded the Tibetan ruler bitterly and denounced him as worthless and irresponsible. Without giving Gyurmed Namgyal a chance to reply, Fucing jumped and caught him by the arm while Labdon cut him down with a sword. Within minutes, Gyurmed Namgyal was murdered in cold blood. Taken by surprise, the other Tibetans in the outer room were also killed by the two Ambans who at once sent a messenger to Duke Pandita asking him to accept the rein of the new government. A shocked Duke Pandita at once ran to the Dalai Lama to consult and seek advice on the turn of the event and the Amban's instructions.

Unfortunately for the murderers of Gyurmed Namgyal, Lobsang Tashi, a chamberlain of the late Tibetan ruler who had accompanied his master to the conference that afternoon, had escaped from the window of the Manchu residence. Enraged by the treachery of the Amban and saddened by the murder of his master, he collected a crowd of 1000 strong and marched on the Manchu garrison. As there was no regular Tibetan police force, both the Dalai Lama and the minister Duke Pandita failed to control the mob. Krichen Dorjechang, one of the highest Gelugpa lama and abbot of Radeng came out of Potala and tried to stop the mob by pasting a proclamation that Gyurmed Namgyal had been executed for his crime and those who assaulted the Amban will be visited by the wrath of the emperor. But the fury of the mob had reached such extremes that they shouted down the Krichen Dorjechang, tore away the proclamation and even turned their weapons on his sacred person. Soon they surrounded the Amban's residence and set it on fire. Both Fucing and Labdon were killed by the Tibetans. Most of their associates died in fighting. Within a few hours of destruction, 49 Manchu soldiers and 77 civilians alongwith the two high handed Ambans lay dead

or scorched. The mob then turned towards the military paymaster and looted his residence. As night fell on that fateful day of horror and confusion, the mob slowly melted away.

Losang Tashi, the man who avenged the murder of his master Gyurmed Namgyal, by organising and leading a mob that put to death the two Manchu Ambans and looted the Manchu paymaster's office was, unfortunately, without any qualities of a leader that can turn the tide of a crisis. His frenzied mob dispersed as soon as the day was over When dawn broke over a chaotic and ravaged Lhasa which had seen so much bloodshed since 1717, Losang Tashi realised his only chance of escape from the clutch of the Manchu retaliation was a flight to Dzungaria, the Mongols with whom his master Gyurmed Namgyal had been in secret touch to oust the Manchu garrison from Tibet. And with a few trusted friends, Losang Tashi fled towards Dsungaria.

Meanwhile, the Dalai Lama took the situation under control. Appointing Duke Pandita as the new administrator, the Dalai Lama strongly forbid any Tibetans to help Losang Tashi and his supporters who avenged the murder of Gyurmed Namgyal. About 200 Manchu and Chinese civilians and soldiers who had escaped the fury of the mob were sheltered in the Potala by the Dalai Lama. The new administration under Duke Pandita fiercely hunted down the leaders of the mob and by 21st November, Duke Pandita was boasting that Losang Tashi and most of the rebel leaders have been arrested and taken into custody. And the situation was back to normal by 22nd November. The Dalai Lama sent a full report of the event to the Manchu emperor while whole Lhasa apprehensively awaited the arrival of the imperial troops, with the spectre of the gruesome executions of Ngabo, Lumpanas and their associates in 1728 coming vividly into Tibetan memory once again.

As a comic interlude to the tragic scenario, the Mongol princess Samdrub Drolma, the bride of Gyurmed Namgyal arrived at Lhasa to be told that her would be husband had been murdered by the Ambans. So as not to offend the Mongol aristocracy, she was received with courtesy and

called on the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama as tradition demanded. She returned to her country soon after.

The Manchu emperor had learnt of the event through the letter of a survivor of the massacre and at once prepared retaliation. In addition to Bandi who was on his way to Lhasa, the emperor appointed Cereng Namgyal and Chao-hui as commissioners and ordered them to advance. When a few days later he received a detailed report from the Tibetan administration and the Dalai Lama, he clearly saw that there was no rebellion as the rebels including Losang Tashi had been imprisoned and realised the uselessness of despatching a large force. Accordingly, he changed his plans and a neat Manchu force under the commissioners was now decided upon. But Bandi, the old warrior, was to arrive in Lhasa before anyone else and take the law into his own hands.

On January 19th, 1751, Lhasa received Bandi, an old but cruel Manchu warrior. No sooner had he arrived he began investigations of the incident without bothering to wait for the arrival of the other Manchu commissioners appointed by the emperor.

After sending a detailed report of the event to the emperor, he took over from the Tibetan administration the charge of the rebel leaders imprisoned by them. Subjecting them to torture, he severely questioned them. Their confessions implicated another 14 leaders. Only after four days of arrival, he had completed the investigations. Though the Dalai Lama tried to intercede in favour of the accused, Bandi did not release the prisoners. On January 23rd, 1751, holy Lhasa was treated to a sickening and gruesome execution reminiscient of the 1728 execution of Ngabo and Lumpanas in its horrid detail. Losang Tashi and six other Tibetan rebels were slowly sliced to death. Others were either beheaded or strangled. As an afterthought, Bandi hung the heads of the victims on poles for the populace to gaze upon in horror and submission. A few of the remaining rebels were punished and their properties were confiscated. Bandi's hasty action in dealing with the rebels offended the other commissioners but the em-

peror overlooked it. He instructed Bandi, as an afterthought, to consult the others, henceforth.

Gyurmed Namgyal's wife and son Dargyas Tseten were to be taken to Peking but in March of the same year, the king of Ladakh informed Lhasa of Dsungar merchants from Yarkand enquiring about the Dalai Lama and Lhasa. Worse still, Gyurmed Namgyal's messengers to Dsungar ruler Lama Darja (1750-1753) were caught on their return and evidence of Gyurmed Namgyal's conspiracy with the Dsungar military help to oust Manchus came to light. Gyurmed Namgyal had asked for Dsungar military help. Their troops with cannons were to enter Tibet through Tsang province and stay with the Tsang nomads till the time for action. When the Manchus saw the substance of Gyurmed Namgyal's desire for eradicating imperial control over Tibet, the full ferocity of Manchu wrath fell on the surviving family members of the late ruler. His wife and son were ordered to be executed. Even his father's home estate Phola and Rinchentse castles were confiscated from the descendants of Miwang Pholanay forever. On the other hand, Gyurmed Wangyal, the son of Gyurmed Namgyal's brother Yeshi Tseten was given the nominal governorship of Ngari though he was always required to stay in Lhasa in person. Thus came to a sad end Gyurmed Namgyal's dream to make Tibet free of Manchu overlordship culminating in a tragic stop to the magnificant line of Miwang Pholanay.

In retrospect, the 11th of November of the year 1750 proved to be an unlucky day for the young and restless Gyurmed Namgyal. His secret plan of a Tibetan uprising with Dsungar military help against the Manchu control over Tibetan administration came to an abrupt end on that fateful day when he was stabbed to death by the two Ambans. Yet in a sense, the fateful day of that November was a national tragedy. Though Gyurmed Namgyal was not among the best rulers of Tibet, his secret dream of a Tibetan government free of Manchu intrigues and interferences was nationalistic and in the interest of the Tibetan nation. That he was young and inexperienced, hasty and occasion-

ally cruel is beyond dispute. The length to which he went to finish off his brother Yeshi Tseten, his family and supporters and his public boasting of his plan to wipe the Manchus off the Tibetan soil are enough indication of his political insensitivity and immaturity. But within his short term as the centre of Tibetan politics, Gyurmed Namgyal should attempt to find a way to get rid of the Manchu domination is admirable especially when it was without any moral or national help, guidance or support from his elder ministers who were totally subservient to the Manchu emperor, or else from the Dalai Lama and Panchen Rinpoche both of whom always played the role of tactful mediators without annoying the emperor or the Tibetan ruler. And the shadow of the murder of Gyurmed Namgyal, a lonely Tibetan hero, and the merciless execution of his avengers whom the Tibetan ministers themselves arrested and imprisoned, falls large over the face of the then Lhasa and its rather subservient and selfish politicians.

Though most historians tend to dismiss Gyurmed Namgyal as an irresponsible and repressive ruler totally unbecoming of the son of Miwang Pholanay, his ill fated attempt to rise against the Manchu emperor offers a consolation to the memory of his outstanding father, who though talented, shrewd and courageous, survived as a protege of the Manchu emperor right till his last breath.

With Gyurmed Namgyal's murder at the hands of the Manchu Ambans, the house of Miwang Pholanay as a vital factor in Tibetan politics came to a sudden end. Shocked by the totally unexpected behaviour of Gyurmed Namgyal and conscious of its political implications, the Manchu emperor did not let the system concentrate so much power in a single person. Four ministers formed the Kashag in which one minister represented the ecclessiastical department. And the Dalai Lama, the only institution that maintained intact the spiritual and temporal harmony of Tibet, acquired full powers as during the great Fifth Dalai Lama.